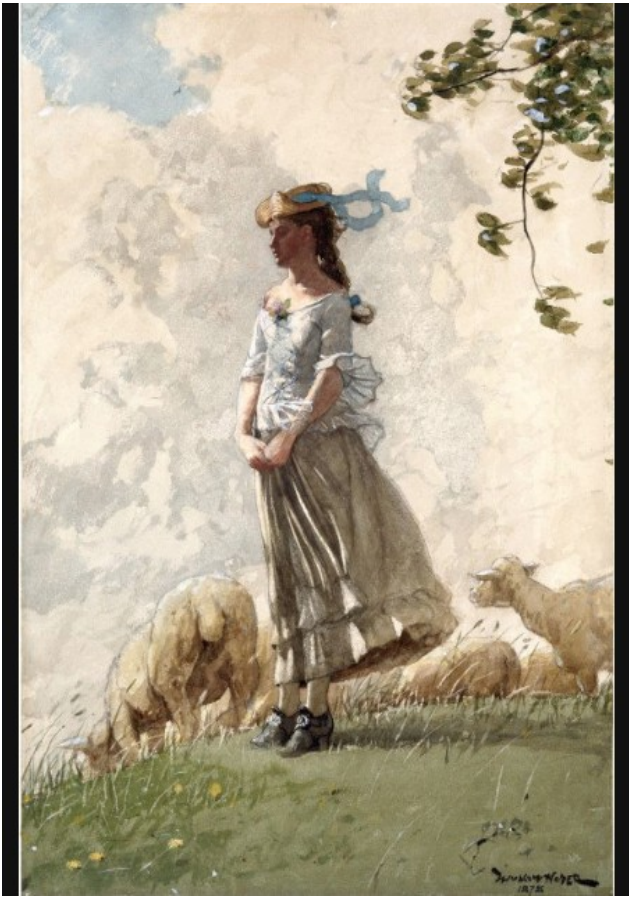


SUMMER'S END 2018 PD SHORT STORIES



Fresh Air, by Winslow Homer, Brooklyn Museum

THE GOD OF THE GONGS, by G. K. Chesterton
AROUND THE SPADE WAGON, by Andy Adams
INDIAN SUMMER OF A FORSYTE, by John Galsworthy
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THE VERTICAL CITY, by Fannie Hurst

THE GOD OF THE GONGS

Project Gutenberg's *The Wisdom of Father Brown*, by G. K. Chesterton

IT was one of those chilly and empty afternoons in early winter, when the daylight is silver rather than gold and pewter rather than silver. If it was dreary in a hundred bleak offices and yawning drawing-rooms, it was drearier still along the edges of the flat Essex coast, where the monotony was the more inhuman for being broken at very long intervals by a lamp-post that looked less civilized than a tree, or a tree that looked more ugly than a lamp-post. A light fall of snow had half-melted into a few strips, also looking leaden rather than silver, when it had been fixed again by the seal of frost; no fresh snow had fallen, but a ribbon of the old snow ran along the very margin of the coast, so as to parallel the pale ribbon of the foam.

The line of the sea looked frozen in the very vividness of its violet-blue, like the vein of a frozen finger. For miles and miles, forward and back, there was no breathing soul, save two pedestrians, walking at a brisk pace, though one had much longer legs and took much longer strides than the other.

It did not seem a very appropriate place or time for a holiday, but Father Brown had few holidays, and had to take them when he could, and he always preferred, if possible, to take them in company with his old friend Flambeau, ex-criminal and ex-detective. The priest had had a fancy for visiting his old parish at Cobhole, and was going north-eastward along the coast.

After walking a mile or two farther, they found that the shore was beginning to be formally embanked, so as to form something like a parade; the ugly lamp-posts became less few and far between and more ornamental, though quite equally ugly. Half a mile farther on Father Brown was puzzled first by little labyrinths of flowerless flower-pots, covered with the low, flat, quiet-coloured plants that look less like a garden than a tessellated pavement, between weak curly paths studded with seats with curly backs. He faintly sniffed the atmosphere of a certain sort of seaside town that he did not specially care about, and, looking ahead along the parade by the sea, he saw something that put the matter beyond a doubt. In the grey distance the big bandstand of a watering-place stood up like a giant mushroom with six legs.

"I suppose," said Father Brown, turning up his coat-collar and drawing a woollen scarf rather closer round his neck, "that we are approaching a pleasure resort."

"I fear," answered Flambeau, "a pleasure resort to which few people just now have the pleasure of resorting. They try to revive these places in

the winter, but it never succeeds except with Brighton and the old ones. This must be Seawood, I think--Lord Pooley's experiment; he had the Sicilian Singers down at Christmas, and there's talk about holding one of the great glove-fights here. But they'll have to chuck the rotten place into the sea; it's as dreary as a lost railway-carriage."

They had come under the big bandstand, and the priest was looking up at it with a curiosity that had something rather odd about it, his head a little on one side, like a bird's. It was the conventional, rather tawdry kind of erection for its purpose: a flattened dome or canopy, gilt here and there, and lifted on six slender pillars of painted wood, the whole being raised about five feet above the parade on a round wooden platform like a drum. But there was something fantastic about the snow combined with something artificial about the gold that haunted Flambeau as well as his friend with some association he could not capture, but which he knew was at once artistic and alien.

"I've got it," he said at last. "It's Japanese. It's like those fanciful Japanese prints, where the snow on the mountain looks like sugar, and the gilt on the pagodas is like gilt on gingerbread. It looks just like a little pagan temple."

"Yes," said Father Brown. "Let's have a look at the god." And with an agility hardly to be expected of him, he hopped up on to the raised platform.

"Oh, very well," said Flambeau, laughing; and the next instant his own towering figure was visible on that quaint elevation.

Slight as was the difference of height, it gave in those level wastes a sense of seeing yet farther and farther across land and sea. Inland the little wintry gardens faded into a confused grey copse; beyond that, in the distance, were long low barns of a lonely farmhouse, and beyond that nothing but the long East Anglian plains. Seawards there was no sail or sign of life save a few seagulls: and even they looked like the last snowflakes, and seemed to float rather than fly.

Flambeau turned abruptly at an exclamation behind him. It seemed to come from lower down than might have been expected, and to be addressed to his heels rather than his head. He instantly held out his hand, but he could hardly help laughing at what he saw. For some reason or other the platform had given way under Father Brown, and the unfortunate little man had dropped through to the level of the parade. He was just tall enough, or short enough, for his head alone to stick out of the hole in the broken wood, looking like St John the Baptist's head on a charger. The face wore a disconcerted expression, as did, perhaps, that of St John the Baptist.

In a moment he began to laugh a little. "This wood must be rotten," said

Flambeau. "Though it seems odd it should bear me, and you go through the weak place. Let me help you out."

But the little priest was looking rather curiously at the corners and edges of the wood alleged to be rotten, and there was a sort of trouble on his brow.

"Come along," cried Flambeau impatiently, still with his big brown hand extended. "Don't you want to get out?"

The priest was holding a splinter of the broken wood between his finger and thumb, and did not immediately reply. At last he said thoughtfully: "Want to get out? Why, no. I rather think I want to get in." And he dived into the darkness under the wooden floor so abruptly as to knock off his big curved clerical hat and leave it lying on the boards above, without any clerical head in it.

Flambeau looked once more inland and out to sea, and once more could see nothing but seas as wintry as the snow, and snows as level as the sea.

There came a scurrying noise behind him, and the little priest came scrambling out of the hole faster than he had fallen in. His face was no longer disconcerted, but rather resolute, and, perhaps only through the reflections of the snow, a trifle paler than usual.

"Well?" asked his tall friend. "Have you found the god of the temple?"

"No," answered Father Brown. "I have found what was sometimes more important. The Sacrifice."

"What the devil do you mean?" cried Flambeau, quite alarmed.

Father Brown did not answer. He was staring, with a knot in his forehead, at the landscape; and he suddenly pointed at it. "What's that house over there?" he asked.

Following his finger, Flambeau saw for the first time the corners of a building nearer than the farmhouse, but screened for the most part with a fringe of trees. It was not a large building, and stood well back from the shore--, but a glint of ornament on it suggested that it was part of the same watering-place scheme of decoration as the bandstand, the little gardens and the curly-backed iron seats.

Father Brown jumped off the bandstand, his friend following; and as they walked in the direction indicated the trees fell away to right and left, and they saw a small, rather flashy hotel, such as is common in resorts--the hotel of the Saloon Bar rather than the Bar Parlour. Almost the whole frontage was of gilt plaster and figured glass, and between

that grey seascape and the grey, witch-like trees, its gimcrack quality had something spectral in its melancholy. They both felt vaguely that if any food or drink were offered at such a hostelry, it would be the paste-board ham and empty mug of the pantomime.

In this, however, they were not altogether confirmed. As they drew nearer and nearer to the place they saw in front of the buffet, which was apparently closed, one of the iron garden-seats with curly backs that had adorned the gardens, but much longer, running almost the whole length of the frontage. Presumably, it was placed so that visitors might sit there and look at the sea, but one hardly expected to find anyone doing it in such weather.

Nevertheless, just in front of the extreme end of the iron seat stood a small round restaurant table, and on this stood a small bottle of Chablis and a plate of almonds and raisins. Behind the table and on the seat sat a dark-haired young man, bareheaded, and gazing at the sea in a state of almost astonishing immobility.

But though he might have been a waxwork when they were within four yards of him, he jumped up like a jack-in-the-box when they came within three, and said in a deferential, though not undignified, manner: "Will you step inside, gentlemen? I have no staff at present, but I can get you anything simple myself."

"Much obliged," said Flambeau. "So you are the proprietor?"

"Yes," said the dark man, dropping back a little into his motionless manner. "My waiters are all Italians, you see, and I thought it only fair they should see their countryman beat the black, if he really can do it. You know the great fight between Malvoli and Nigger Ned is coming off after all?"

"I'm afraid we can't wait to trouble your hospitality seriously," said Father Brown. "But my friend would be glad of a glass of sherry, I'm sure, to keep out the cold and drink success to the Latin champion."

Flambeau did not understand the sherry, but he did not object to it in the least. He could only say amiably: "Oh, thank you very much."

"Sherry, sir--certainly," said their host, turning to his hostel.
"Excuse me if I detain you a few minutes. As I told you, I have no staff--" And he went towards the black windows of his shuttered and unlighted inn.

"Oh, it doesn't really matter," began Flambeau, but the man turned to reassure him.

"I have the keys," he said. "I could find my way in the dark."

"I didn't mean--" began Father Brown.

He was interrupted by a bellowing human voice that came out of the bowels of the uninhabited hotel. It thundered some foreign name loudly but inaudibly, and the hotel proprietor moved more sharply towards it than he had done for Flambeau's sherry. As instant evidence proved, the proprietor had told, then and after, nothing but the literal truth. But both Flambeau and Father Brown have often confessed that, in all their (often outrageous) adventures, nothing had so chilled their blood as that voice of an ogre, sounding suddenly out of a silent and empty inn.

"My cook!" cried the proprietor hastily. "I had forgotten my cook. He will be starting presently. Sherry, sir?"

And, sure enough, there appeared in the doorway a big white bulk with white cap and white apron, as befits a cook, but with the needless emphasis of a black face. Flambeau had often heard that negroes made good cooks. But somehow something in the contrast of colour and caste increased his surprise that the hotel proprietor should answer the call of the cook, and not the cook the call of the proprietor. But he reflected that head cooks are proverbially arrogant; and, besides, the host had come back with the sherry, and that was the great thing.

"I rather wonder," said Father Brown, "that there are so few people about the beach, when this big fight is coming on after all. We only met one man for miles."

The hotel proprietor shrugged his shoulders. "They come from the other end of the town, you see--from the station, three miles from here. They are only interested in the sport, and will stop in hotels for the night only. After all, it is hardly weather for basking on the shore."

"Or on the seat," said Flambeau, and pointed to the little table.

"I have to keep a look-out," said the man with the motionless face. He was a quiet, well-featured fellow, rather sallow; his dark clothes had nothing distinctive about them, except that his black necktie was worn rather high, like a stock, and secured by a gold pin with some grotesque head to it. Nor was there anything notable in the face, except something that was probably a mere nervous trick--a habit of opening one eye more narrowly than the other, giving the impression that the other was larger, or was, perhaps, artificial.

The silence that ensued was broken by their host saying quietly:
"Whereabouts did you meet the one man on your march?"

"Curiously enough," answered the priest, "close by here--just by that bandstand."

Flambeau, who had sat on the long iron seat to finish his sherry, put it down and rose to his feet, staring at his friend in amazement. He opened his mouth to speak, and then shut it again.

“Curious,” said the dark-haired man thoughtfully. “What was he like?”

“It was rather dark when I saw him,” began Father Brown, “but he was--”

As has been said, the hotel-keeper can be proved to have told the precise truth. His phrase that the cook was starting presently was fulfilled to the letter, for the cook came out, pulling his gloves on, even as they spoke.

But he was a very different figure from the confused mass of white and black that had appeared for an instant in the doorway. He was buttoned and buckled up to his bursting eyeballs in the most brilliant fashion. A tall black hat was tilted on his broad black head--a hat of the sort that the French wit has compared to eight mirrors. But somehow the black man was like the black hat. He also was black, and yet his glossy skin flung back the light at eight angles or more. It is needless to say that he wore white spats and a white slip inside his waistcoat. The red flower stood up in his buttonhole aggressively, as if it had suddenly grown there. And in the way he carried his cane in one hand and his cigar in the other there was a certain attitude--an attitude we must always remember when we talk of racial prejudices: something innocent and insolent--the cake walk.

“Sometimes,” said Flambeau, looking after him, “I’m not surprised that they lynch them.”

“I am never surprised,” said Father Brown, “at any work of hell. But as I was saying,” he resumed, as the negro, still ostentatiously pulling on his yellow gloves, betook himself briskly towards the watering-place, a queer music-hall figure against that grey and frosty scene--“as I was saying, I couldn’t describe the man very minutely, but he had a flourish and old-fashioned whiskers and moustachios, dark or dyed, as in the pictures of foreign financiers, round his neck was wrapped a long purple scarf that thrashed out in the wind as he walked. It was fixed at the throat rather in the way that nurses fix children’s comforters with a safety-pin. Only this,” added the priest, gazing placidly out to sea, “was not a safety-pin.”

The man sitting on the long iron bench was also gazing placidly out to sea. Now he was once more in repose. Flambeau felt quite certain that one of his eyes was naturally larger than the other. Both were now well opened, and he could almost fancy the left eye grew larger as he gazed.

“It was a very long gold pin, and had the carved head of a monkey or

some such thing,” continued the cleric; “and it was fixed in a rather odd way--he wore pince-nez and a broad black--”

The motionless man continued to gaze at the sea, and the eyes in his head might have belonged to two different men. Then he made a movement of blinding swiftness.

Father Brown had his back to him, and in that flash might have fallen dead on his face. Flambeau had no weapon, but his large brown hands were resting on the end of the long iron seat. His shoulders abruptly altered their shape, and he heaved the whole huge thing high over his head, like a headsman’s axe about to fall. The mere height of the thing, as he held it vertical, looked like a long iron ladder by which he was inviting men to climb towards the stars. But the long shadow, in the level evening light, looked like a giant brandishing the Eiffel Tower. It was the shock of that shadow, before the shock of the iron crash, that made the stranger quail and dodge, and then dart into his inn, leaving the flat and shining dagger he had dropped exactly where it had fallen.

“We must get away from here instantly,” cried Flambeau, flinging the huge seat away with furious indifference on the beach. He caught the little priest by the elbow and ran him down a grey perspective of barren back garden, at the end of which there was a closed back garden door. Flambeau bent over it an instant in violent silence, and then said: “The door is locked.”

As he spoke a black feather from one of the ornamental firs fell, brushing the brim of his hat. It startled him more than the small and distant detonation that had come just before. Then came another distant detonation, and the door he was trying to open shook under the bullet buried in it. Flambeau’s shoulders again filled out and altered suddenly. Three hinges and a lock burst at the same instant, and he went out into the empty path behind, carrying the great garden door with him, as Samson carried the gates of Gaza.

Then he flung the garden door over the garden wall, just as a third shot picked up a spurt of snow and dust behind his heel. Without ceremony he snatched up the little priest, slung him astraddle on his shoulders, and went racing towards Seawood as fast as his long legs could carry him. It was not until nearly two miles farther on that he set his small companion down. It had hardly been a dignified escape, in spite of the classic model of Anchises, but Father Brown’s face only wore a broad grin.

“Well,” said Flambeau, after an impatient silence, as they resumed their more conventional tramp through the streets on the edge of the town, where no outrage need be feared, “I don’t know what all this means, but I take it I may trust my own eyes that you never met the man you have so accurately described.”

"I did meet him in a way," Brown said, biting his finger rather nervously--"I did really. And it was too dark to see him properly, because it was under that bandstand affair. But I'm afraid I didn't describe him so very accurately after all, for his pince-nez was broken under him, and the long gold pin wasn't stuck through his purple scarf but through his heart."

"And I suppose," said the other in a lower voice, "that glass-eyed guy had something to do with it."

"I had hoped he had only a little," answered Brown in a rather troubled voice, "and I may have been wrong in what I did. I acted on impulse. But I fear this business has deep roots and dark."

They walked on through some streets in silence. The yellow lamps were beginning to be lit in the cold blue twilight, and they were evidently approaching the more central parts of the town. Highly coloured bills announcing the glove-fight between Nigger Ned and Malvoli were slapped about the walls.

"Well," said Flambeau, "I never murdered anyone, even in my criminal days, but I can almost sympathize with anyone doing it in such a dreary place. Of all God-forsaken dustbins of Nature, I think the most heart-breaking are places like that bandstand, that were meant to be festive and are forlorn. I can fancy a morbid man feeling he must kill his rival in the solitude and irony of such a scene. I remember once taking a tramp in your glorious Surrey hills, thinking of nothing but gorse and skylarks, when I came out on a vast circle of land, and over me lifted a vast, voiceless structure, tier above tier of seats, as huge as a Roman amphitheatre and as empty as a new letter-rack. A bird sailed in heaven over it. It was the Grand Stand at Epsom. And I felt that no one would ever be happy there again."

"It's odd you should mention Epsom," said the priest. "Do you remember what was called the Sutton Mystery, because two suspected men--ice-cream men, I think--happened to live at Sutton? They were eventually released. A man was found strangled, it was said, on the Downs round that part. As a fact, I know (from an Irish policeman who is a friend of mine) that he was found close up to the Epsom Grand Stand--in fact, only hidden by one of the lower doors being pushed back."

"That is queer," assented Flambeau. "But it rather confirms my view that such pleasure places look awfully lonely out of season, or the man wouldn't have been murdered there."

"I'm not so sure he--" began Brown, and stopped.

"Not so sure he was murdered?" queried his companion.

“Not so sure he was murdered out of the season,” answered the little priest, with simplicity. “Don’t you think there’s something rather tricky about this solitude, Flambeau? Do you feel sure a wise murderer would always want the spot to be lonely? It’s very, very seldom a man is quite alone. And, short of that, the more alone he is, the more certain he is to be seen. No; I think there must be some other--Why, here we are at the Pavilion or Palace, or whatever they call it.”

They had emerged on a small square, brilliantly lighted, of which the principal building was gay with gilding, gaudy with posters, and flanked with two giant photographs of Malvoli and Nigger Ned.

“Hallo!” cried Flambeau in great surprise, as his clerical friend stumped straight up the broad steps. “I didn’t know pugilism was your latest hobby. Are you going to see the fight?”

“I don’t think there will be any fight,” replied Father Brown.

They passed rapidly through ante-rooms and inner rooms; they passed through the hall of combat itself, raised, roped, and padded with innumerable seats and boxes, and still the cleric did not look round or pause till he came to a clerk at a desk outside a door marked “Committee”. There he stopped and asked to see Lord Pooley.

The attendant observed that his lordship was very busy, as the fight was coming on soon, but Father Brown had a good-tempered tedium of reiteration for which the official mind is generally not prepared. In a few moments the rather baffled Flambeau found himself in the presence of a man who was still shouting directions to another man going out of the room. “Be careful, you know, about the ropes after the fourth--Well, and what do you want, I wonder!”

Lord Pooley was a gentleman, and, like most of the few remaining to our race, was worried--especially about money. He was half grey and half flaxen, and he had the eyes of fever and a high-bridged, frost-bitten nose.

“Only a word,” said Father Brown. “I have come to prevent a man being killed.”

Lord Pooley bounded off his chair as if a spring had flung him from it. “I’m damned if I’ll stand any more of this!” he cried. “You and your committees and parsons and petitions! Weren’t there parsons in the old days, when they fought without gloves? Now they’re fighting with the regulation gloves, and there’s not the rag of a possibility of either of the boxers being killed.”

“I didn’t mean either of the boxers,” said the little priest.

“Well, well, well!” said the nobleman, with a touch of frosty humour.
“Who’s going to be killed? The referee?”

“I don’t know who’s going to be killed,” replied Father Brown, with a reflective stare. “If I did I shouldn’t have to spoil your pleasure. I could simply get him to escape. I never could see anything wrong about prize-fights. As it is, I must ask you to announce that the fight is off for the present.”

“Anything else?” jeered the gentleman with feverish eyes. “And what do you say to the two thousand people who have come to see it?”

“I say there will be one thousand nine-hundred and ninety-nine of them left alive when they have seen it,” said Father Brown.

Lord Pooley looked at Flambeau. “Is your friend mad?” he asked.

“Far from it,” was the reply.

“And look here,” resumed Pooley in his restless way, “it’s worse than that. A whole pack of Italians have turned up to back Malvoli--swarthy, savage fellows of some country, anyhow. You know what these Mediterranean races are like. If I send out word that it’s off we shall have Malvoli storming in here at the head of a whole Corsican clan.”

“My lord, it is a matter of life and death,” said the priest. “Ring your bell. Give your message. And see whether it is Malvoli who answers.”

The nobleman struck the bell on the table with an odd air of new curiosity. He said to the clerk who appeared almost instantly in the doorway: “I have a serious announcement to make to the audience shortly. Meanwhile, would you kindly tell the two champions that the fight will have to be put off.”

The clerk stared for some seconds as if at a demon and vanished.

“What authority have you for what you say?” asked Lord Pooley abruptly.
“Whom did you consult?”

“I consulted a bandstand,” said Father Brown, scratching his head. “But, no, I’m wrong; I consulted a book, too. I picked it up on a bookstall in London--very cheap, too.”

He had taken out of his pocket a small, stout, leather-bound volume, and Flambeau, looking over his shoulder, could see that it was some book of old travels, and had a leaf turned down for reference.

““The only form in which Voodoo--”” began Father Brown, reading aloud.

“In which what?” inquired his lordship.

““In which Voodoo,”” repeated the reader, almost with relish, ““is widely organized outside Jamaica itself is in the form known as the Monkey, or the God of the Gongs, which is powerful in many parts of the two American continents, especially among half-breeds, many of whom look exactly like white men. It differs from most other forms of devil-worship and human sacrifice in the fact that the blood is not shed formally on the altar, but by a sort of assassination among the crowd. The gongs beat with a deafening din as the doors of the shrine open and the monkey-god is revealed; almost the whole congregation rivet ecstatic eyes on him. But after--””

The door of the room was flung open, and the fashionable negro stood framed in it, his eyeballs rolling, his silk hat still insolently tilted on his head. “Huh!” he cried, showing his apish teeth. “What this? Huh! Huh! You steal a coloured gentleman’s prize--prize his already--yo’ think yo’ jes’ save that white ‘Talian trash--”

“The matter is only deferred,” said the nobleman quietly. “I will be with you to explain in a minute or two.”

“Who you to--” shouted Nigger Ned, beginning to storm.

“My name is Pooley,” replied the other, with a creditable coolness. “I am the organizing secretary, and I advise you just now to leave the room.”

“Who this fellow?” demanded the dark champion, pointing to the priest disdainfully.

“My name is Brown,” was the reply. “And I advise you just now to leave the country.”

The prize-fighter stood glaring for a few seconds, and then, rather to the surprise of Flambeau and the others, strode out, sending the door to with a crash behind him.

“Well,” asked Father Brown rubbing his dusty hair up, “what do you think of Leonardo da Vinci? A beautiful Italian head.”

“Look here,” said Lord Pooley, “I’ve taken a considerable responsibility, on your bare word. I think you ought to tell me more about this.”

“You are quite right, my lord,” answered Brown. “And it won’t take long to tell.” He put the little leather book in his overcoat pocket. “I think we know all that this can tell us, but you shall look at it to see

if I'm right. That negro who has just swaggered out is one of the most dangerous men on earth, for he has the brains of a European, with the instincts of a cannibal. He has turned what was clean, common-sense butchery among his fellow-barbarians into a very modern and scientific secret society of assassins. He doesn't know I know it, nor, for the matter of that, that I can't prove it."

There was a silence, and the little man went on.

"But if I want to murder somebody, will it really be the best plan to make sure I'm alone with him?"

Lord Pooley's eyes recovered their frosty twinkle as he looked at the little clergyman. He only said: "If you want to murder somebody, I should advise it."

Father Brown shook his head, like a murderer of much riper experience. "So Flambeau said," he replied, with a sigh. "But consider. The more a man feels lonely the less he can be sure he is alone. It must mean empty spaces round him, and they are just what make him obvious. Have you never seen one ploughman from the heights, or one shepherd from the valleys? Have you never walked along a cliff, and seen one man walking along the sands? Didn't you know when he's killed a crab, and wouldn't you have known if it had been a creditor? No! No! No! For an intelligent murderer, such as you or I might be, it is an impossible plan to make sure that nobody is looking at you."

"But what other plan is there?"

"There is only one," said the priest. "To make sure that everybody is looking at something else. A man is throttled close by the big stand at Epsom. Anybody might have seen it done while the stand stood empty--any tramp under the hedges or motorist among the hills. But nobody would have seen it when the stand was crowded and the whole ring roaring, when the favourite was coming in first--or wasn't. The twisting of a neck-cloth, the thrusting of a body behind a door could be done in an instant--so long as it was that instant. It was the same, of course,"

he continued turning to Flambeau, "with that poor fellow under the bandstand. He was dropped through the hole (it wasn't an accidental hole) just at some very dramatic moment of the entertainment, when the bow of some great violinist or the voice of some great singer opened or came to its climax. And here, of course, when the knock-out blow came--it would not be the only one. That is the little trick Nigger Ned has adopted from his old God of Gongs."

"By the way, Malvoli--" Pooley began.

"Malvoli," said the priest, "has nothing to do with it. I dare say he has some Italians with him, but our amiable friends are not Italians."

They are octoroons and African half-bloods of various shades, but I fear we English think all foreigners are much the same so long as they are dark and dirty. Also," he added, with a smile, "I fear the English decline to draw any fine distinction between the moral character produced by my religion and that which blooms out of Voodoo."

The blaze of the spring season had burst upon Seawood, littering its foreshore with famines and bathing-machines, with nomadic preachers and nigger minstrels, before the two friends saw it again, and long before the storm of pursuit after the strange secret society had died away. Almost on every hand the secret of their purpose perished with them. The man of the hotel was found drifting dead on the sea like so much seaweed; his right eye was closed in peace, but his left eye was wide open, and glistened like glass in the moon. Nigger Ned had been overtaken a mile or two away, and murdered three policemen with his closed left hand. The remaining officer was surprised--nay, pained--and the negro got away. But this was enough to set all the English papers in a flame, and for a month or two the main purpose of the British Empire was to prevent the buck nigger (who was so in both senses) escaping by any English port. Persons of a figure remotely reconcilable with his were subjected to quite extraordinary inquisitions, made to scrub their faces before going on board ship, as if each white complexion were made up like a mask, of greasepaint. Every negro in England was put under special regulations and made to report himself; the outgoing ships would no more have taken a nigger than a basilisk. For people had found out how fearful and vast and silent was the force of the savage secret society, and by the time Flambeau and Father Brown were leaning on the parade parapet in April, the Black Man meant in England almost what he once meant in Scotland.

"He must be still in England," observed Flambeau, "and horridly well hidden, too. They must have found him at the ports if he had only whitened his face."

"You see, he is really a clever man," said Father Brown apologetically. "And I'm sure he wouldn't whiten his face."

"Well, but what would he do?"

"I think," said Father Brown, "he would blacken his face."

Flambeau, leaning motionless on the parapet, laughed and said: "My dear fellow!"

Father Brown, also leaning motionless on the parapet, moved one finger for an instant into the direction of the soot-masked niggers singing on the sands.



AROUND THE SPADE WAGON

The Project Gutenberg EBook of *Cattle Brands*, by Andy Adams

It was an early spring. The round-up was set for the 10th of June. The grass was well forward, while the cattle had changed their shaggy winter coats to glossy suits of summer silk. The brands were as readable as an alphabet.

It was one day yet before the round-up of the Cherokee Strip. This strip of leased Indian lands was to be worked in three divisions. We were on our way to represent the Coldwater Pool in the western division, on the annual round-up. Our outfit was four men and thirty horses. We were to represent a range that had twelve thousand cattle on it, a total of forty-seven brands. We had been in the saddle since early morning, and as we came out on a narrow divide, we caught our first glimpse of the Cottonwoods at Antelope Springs, the rendezvous for this division. The setting sun was scarcely half an hour high, and the camp was yet five miles distant. We had covered sixty miles that day, traveling light, our bedding lashed on gentle saddle horses. We rode up the mesa quite a little distance to avoid some rough broken country, then turned southward toward the Springs. Before turning off, we could see with the naked eye signs of life at the meeting-point. The wagon sheets of half a dozen chuck-wagons shone white in the dim distance, while small bands of saddle horses could be distinctly seen grazing about.

When we halted at noon that day to change our mounts, we sighted to the northward some seven miles distant an outfit similar to our own. We were on the lookout for this cavalcade; they were supposed to be the "Spade" outfit, on their way to attend the round-up in the middle division, where our pasture lay. This year, as in years past, we had exchanged the courtesies of the range with them. Their men on our division were made welcome at our wagon, and we on theirs were extended the same courtesy. For this reason we had hoped to meet them and exchange the chronicle of the day, concerning the condition of cattle on their range, the winter drift, and who would be captain this year on the western division, but had traveled the entire day without meeting a man.

Night had almost set in when we reached the camp, and to our satisfaction and delight found the Spade wagon already there, though their men and horses would not arrive until the next day. To hungry men like ourselves, the welcome of their cook was hospitality in the fullest sense of the word. We stretched ropes from the wagon wheels,

and in a few moments' time were busy hobbling our mounts. Darkness had settled over the camp as we were at this work, while an occasional horseman rode by with the common inquiry, "Whose outfit is this?" and the cook, with one end of the rope in his hand, would feel the host in him sufficiently to reply in tones supercilious, "The Coldwater Pool men are with us this year."

Our arrival was heralded through the camp with the same rapidity with which gossip circulates, equally in a tenement alley or the upper crust of society. The cook had informed us that we had been inquired for by some Panhandle man; so before we had finished hobbling, a stranger sang out across the ropes in the darkness, "Is Billy Edwards here?" Receiving an affirmative answer from among the horses' feet, he added, "Come out, then, and shake hands with a friend."

Edwards arose from his work, and looking across the backs of the circle of horses about him, at the undistinguishable figure at the rope, replied, "Whoever you are, I reckon the acquaintance will hold good until I get these horses hobbled."

"Who is it?" inquired "Mouse" from over near the hind wheel of the wagon, where he was applying the hemp to the horses' ankles.

"I don't know," said Billy, as he knelt among the horses and resumed his work,--"some geranium out there wants me to come out and shake hands, pow-wow, and make some medicine with him; that's all. Say, we'll leave Chino for picket, and that Chihuahua cutting horse of Coon's, you have to put a rope on when you come to him. He's too touchy to sabe hobbles if you don't."

When we had finished hobbling, and the horses were turned loose, the stranger proved to be "Babe" Bradshaw, an old chum of Edwards's. The Spade cook added an earthly laurel to his temporal crown with the supper to which he shortly invited us. Bradshaw had eaten with the general wagon, but he sat around while we ate. There was little conversation during the supper, for our appetites were such and the spread so inviting that it simply absorbed us.

"Don't bother me," said Edwards to his old chum, in reply to some inquiry. "Can't you see that I'm occupied at present?"

We did justice to the supper, having had no dinner that day. The cook even urged, with an earnestness worthy of a motherly landlady, several dishes, but his browned potatoes and roast beef claimed our attention. "Well, what are you doing in this country anyhow?" inquired Edwards of Bradshaw, when the inner man had been thoroughly satisfied.

"Well, sir, I have a document in my pocket, with sealing wax but no ribbons on it, which says that I am the duly authorized representative

of the Panhandle Cattle Association. I also have a book in my pocket showing every brand and the names of its owners, and there is a whole raft of them. I may go to St. Louis to act as inspector for my people when the round-up ends."

"You're just as windy as ever, Babe," said Billy. "Strange I didn't recognize you when you first spoke. You're getting natural now, though. I suppose you're borrowing horses, like all these special inspectors do. It's all right with me, but good men must be scarce in your section or you've improved rapidly since you left us. By the way, there is a man or four lying around here that also represents about forty-seven brands. Possibly you'd better not cut any of their cattle or you might get them cut back on you."

"Do you remember," said Babe, "when I dissolved with the 'Ohio' outfit and bought in with the 'LX' people?"

"When you what?" repeated Edwards.

"Well, then, when I was discharged by the 'Ohio's' and got a job ploughing fire-guards with the 'LX's.' Is that plain enough for your conception? I learned a lesson then that has served me since to good advantage. Don't hesitate to ask for the best job on the works, for if you don't you'll see some one get it that isn't as well qualified to fill it as you are. So if you happen to be in St. Louis, call around and see me at the Panhandle headquarters. Don't send in any card by a nigger; walk right in. I might give you some other pointers, but you couldn't appreciate them. You'll more than likely be driving a chuck-wagon in a few years."

These old cronies from boyhood sparred along in give-and-take repartee for some time, finally drifting back to boyhood days, while the harshness that pervaded their conversation before became mild and genial.

"Have you ever been back in old San Saba since we left?" inquired Edwards after a long meditative silence.

"Oh, yes, I spent a winter back there two years ago, though it was hard lines to enjoy yourself. I managed to romance about for two or three months, sowing turnip seed and teaching dancing-school. The girls that you and I knew are nearly all married."

"What ever became of the O'Shea girls?" asked Edwards. "You know that I was high card once with the eldest."

"You'd better comfort yourself with the thought," answered Babe, "for you couldn't play third fiddle in her string now. You remember old Dennis O'Shea was land-poor all his life. Well, in the land and cattle

boom a few years ago he was picked up and set on a pedestal. It's wonderful what money can do! The old man was just common bog Irish all his life, until a cattle syndicate bought his lands and cattle for twice what they were worth. Then he blossomed into a capitalist. He always was a trifle hide-bound. Get all you can and can all you get, took precedence and became the first law with your papa-in-law. The old man used to say that the prettiest sight he ever saw was the smoke arising from a 'Snake' branding-iron. They moved to town, and have been to Europe since they left the ranch. Jed Lynch, you know, was smitten on the youngest girl. Well, he had the nerve to call on them after their return from Europe. He says that they live in a big house, their name's on the door, and you have to ring a bell, and then a nigger meets you. It must make a man feel awkward to live around a wagon all his days, and then suddenly change to style and put on a heap of dog. Jed says the red-headed girl, the middle one, married some fellow, and they live with the old folks. He says the other girls treated him nicely, but the old lady, she has got it bad. He says that she just languishes on a sofa, cuts into the conversation now and then, and simply swells up. She don't let the old man come into the parlor at all. Jed says that when the girls were describing their trip through Europe, one of them happened to mention Rome, when the old lady interrupted: 'Rome? Rome? Let me see, I've forgotten, girls. Where is Rome?'

"Don't you remember when we were in Italy,' said one of the girls, trying to refresh her memory.

"Oh, yes, now I remember; that's where I bought you girls such nice long red stockings.'

"The girls suddenly remembered some duty about the house that required their immediate attention, and Jed says that he looked out of the window."

"So you think I've lost my number, do you?" commented Edwards, as he lay on his back and fondly patted a comfortable stomach.

"Well, possibly I have, but it's some consolation to remember that that very good woman that you're slandering used to give me the glad hand and cut the pie large when I called. I may be out of the game, but I'd take a chance yet if I were present; that's what!"

They were singing over at one of the wagons across the draw, and after the song ended, Bradshaw asked, "What ever became of Raneka Bill Hunter?"

"Oh, he's drifting about," said Edwards. "Mouse here can tell you about him. They're old college chums."

"Raneka was working for the '-BQ' people last summer," said Mouse, "but was discharged for hanging a horse, or rather he discharged himself. It seems that some one took a fancy to a horse in his mount. The last man to buy into an outfit that way always gets all the bad horses for his string. As Raneka was a new man there, the result was that some excuse was given him to change, and they rung in a spoilt horse on him in changing. Being new that way, he wasn't on to the horses. The first time he tried to saddle this new horse he showed up bad. The horse trotted up to him when the rope fell on his neck, reared up nicely and playfully, and threw out his forefeet, stripping the three upper buttons off Bill's vest pattern. Bill never said a word about his intentions, but tied him to the corral fence and saddled up his own private horse. There were several men around camp, but they said nothing, being a party to the deal, though they noticed Bill riding away with the spoilt horse. He took him down on the creek about a mile from camp and hung him.

"How did he do it? Why, there was a big cottonwood grew on a bluff bank of the creek. One limb hung out over the bluff, over the bed of the creek. He left the running noose on the horse's neck, climbed out on this overhanging limb, taking the rope through a fork directly over the water. He then climbed down and snubbed the free end of the rope to a small tree, and began taking in his slack. When the rope began to choke the horse, he reared and plunged, throwing himself over the bluff. That settled his ever hurting any one. He was hung higher than Haman. Bill never went back to the camp, but struck out for other quarters. There was a month's wages coming to him, but he would get that later or they might keep it. Life had charms for an old-timer like Bill, and he didn't hanker for any reputation as a broncho-buster. It generally takes a verdant to pine for such honors.

"Last winter when Bill was riding the chuck line, he ran up against a new experience. It seems that some newcomer bought a range over on Black Bear. This new man sought to set at defiance the customs of the range. It was currently reported that he had refused to invite people to stay for dinner, and preferred that no one would ask for a night's lodging, even in winter. This was the gossip of the camps for miles around, so Bill and some juniper of a pardner thought they would make a call on him and see how it was. They made it a point to reach his camp shortly after noon. They met the owner just coming out of the dug-out as they rode up. They exchanged the compliments of the hour, when the new man turned and locked the door of the dug-out with a padlock. Bill sparred around the main question, but finally asked if it was too late to get dinner, and was very politely informed that dinner was over. This latter information was, however, qualified with a profusion of regrets. After a confession of a hard ride made that morning from a camp many miles distant, Bill asked the chance to remain over night. Again the travelers were met with serious regrets, as no one would be at camp that night, business calling the owner

away; he was just starting then. The cowman led out his horse, and after mounting and expressing for the last time his sincere regrets that he could not extend to them the hospitalities of his camp, rode away.

"Bill and his pardner moseyed in an opposite direction a short distance and held a parley. Bill was so nonplussed at the reception that it took him some little time to collect his thoughts. When it thoroughly dawned on him that the courtesies of the range had been trampled under foot by a rank newcomer and himself snubbed, he was aroused to action.

"'Let's go back,' said Bill to his pardner, 'and at least leave our card. He might not like it if we didn't.'

"They went back and dismounted about ten steps from the door. They shot every cartridge they both had, over a hundred between them, through the door, fastened a card with their correct names on it, and rode away. One of the boys that was working there, but was absent at the time, says there was a number of canned tomato and corn crates ranked up at the rear of the dug-out, in range with the door. This lad says that it looked as if they had a special grievance against those canned goods, for they were riddled with lead. That fellow lost enough by that act to have fed all the chuck-line men that would bother him in a year.

"Raneka made it a rule," continued Mouse, "to go down and visit the Cheyennes every winter, sometimes staying a month. He could make a good stagger at speaking their tongue, so that together with his knowledge of the Spanish and the sign language he could converse with them readily. He was perfectly at home with them, and they all liked him. When he used to let his hair grow long, he looked like an Indian. Once, when he was wrangling horses for us during the beef-shipping season, we passed him off for an Indian on some dining-room girls. George Wall was working with us that year, and had gone in ahead to see about the cars and find out when we could pen and the like. We had to drive to the State line, then, to ship. George took dinner at the best hotel in the town, and asked one of the dining-room girls if he might bring in an Indian to supper the next evening. They didn't know, so they referred him to the landlord. George explained to that auger, who, not wishing to offend us, consented. There were about ten girls in the dining-room, and they were on the lookout for the Indian. The next night we penned a little before dark. Not a man would eat at the wagon; every one rode for the hotel. We fixed Bill up in fine shape, put feathers in his hair, streaked his face with red and yellow, and had him all togged out in buckskin, even to moccasins. As we entered the dining-room, George led him by the hand, assuring all the girls that he was perfectly harmless. One long table accommodated us all. George, who sat at the head with our Indian on his right, begged the

girls not to act as though they were afraid; he might notice it. Wall fed him pickles and lump sugar until the supper was brought on. Then he pushed back his chair about four feet, and stared at the girls like an idiot. When George ordered him to eat, he stood up at the table. When he wouldn't let him stand, he took the plate on his knee, and ate one side dish at a time. Finally, when he had eaten everything that suited his taste, he stood up and signed with his hands to the group of girls, muttering, 'Wo-haw, wo-haw.'

"'He wants some more beef,' said Wall. 'Bring him some more beef.' After a while he stood up and signed again, George interpreting his wants to the dining-room girls: 'Bring him some coffee. He's awful fond of coffee.'

"That supper lasted an hour, and he ate enough to kill a horse. As we left the dining-room, he tried to carry away a sugar-bowl, but Wall took it away from him. As we passed out George turned back and apologized to the girls, saying, 'He's a good Injun. I promised him he might eat with us. He'll talk about this for months now. When he goes back to his tribe he'll tell his squaws all about you girls feeding him.'"

"Seems like I remember that fellow Wall," said Bradshaw, meditating.

"Why, of course you do. Weren't you with us when we voted the bonds to the railroad company?" asked Edwards.

"No, never heard of it; must have been after I left. What business did you have voting bonds?"

"Tell him, Coon. I'm too full for utterance," said Edwards.

"If you'd been in this country you'd heard of it," said Coon Floyd. "For a few years everything was dated from that event. It was like 'when the stars fell,' and the 'surrender' with the old-time darkies at home. It seems that some new line of railroad wanted to build in, and wanted bonds voted to them as bonus. Some foxy agent for this new line got among the long-horns, who own the cattle on this Strip, and showed them that it was to their interests to get a competing line in the cattle traffic. The result was, these old long-horns got owly, laid their heads together, and made a little medicine. Every mother's son of us in the Strip was entitled to claim a home somewhere, so they put it up that we should come in and vote for the bonds. It was believed it would be a close race if they carried, for it was by counties that the bonds were voted. Towns that the road would run through would vote unanimously for them, but outlying towns would vote solidly against the bonds. There was a big lot of money used, wherever it came from, for we were royally entertained. Two or three days before the date set for the election, they began to head for this

cow-town, every man on his top horse. Everything was as free as air, and we all understood that a new railroad was a good thing for the cattle interests. We gave it not only our votes, but moral support likewise.

"It was a great gathering. The hotels fed us, and the liveries cared for our horses. The liquid refreshments were provided by the prohibition druggists of the town and were as free as the sunlight. There was an underestimate made on the amount of liquids required, for the town was dry about thirty minutes; but a regular train was run through from Wichita ahead of time, and the embarrassment overcome. There was an opposition line of railroad working against the bonds, but they didn't have any better sense than to send a man down to our town to counteract our exertions. Public sentiment was a delicate matter with us, and while this man had no influence with any of us, we didn't feel the same toward him as we might. He was distributing his tickets around, and putting up a good argument, possibly, from his point of view, when some of these old long-horns hinted to the boys to show the fellow that he wasn't wanted. 'Don't hurt him,' said one old cow-man to this same Wall, 'but give him a scare, so he will know that we don't indorse him a little bit. Let him know that this town knows how to vote without being told. I'll send a man to rescue him, when things have gone far enough. You'll know when to let up.'

"That was sufficient. George went into a store and cut off about fifty feet of new rope. Some fellows that knew how tied a hangman's knot. As we came up to the stranger, we heard him say to a man, 'I tell you, sir, these bonds will pauperize unborn gener--' But the noose dropped over his neck, and cut short his argument. We led him a block and a half through the little town, during which there was a pointed argument between Wall and a "Z----" man whether the city scales or the stockyards arch gate would be the best place to hang him. There were a hundred men around him and hanging on to the rope, when a druggist, whom most of them knew, burst through the crowd, and whipping out a knife cut the rope within a few feet of his neck. 'What in hell are you varments trying to do?' roared the druggist. 'This man is a cousin of mine. Going to hang him, are you? Well, you'll have to hang me with him when you do.'

"'Just as soon make it two as one,' snarled George. 'When did you get the chips in this game, I'd like to know? Oppose the progress of the town, too, do you?'

"'No, I don't,' said the druggist, 'and I'll see that my cousin here doesn't.'

"'That's all we ask, then,' said Wall; 'turn him loose, boys. We don't want to hang no man. We hold you responsible if he opens his mouth again against the bonds.'

"Hold me responsible, gentlemen,' said the druggist, with a profound bow. 'Come with me, Cousin,' he said to the Anti.

"The druggist took him through his store, and up some back stairs; and once he had him alone, this was his advice, as reported to us later: 'You're a stranger to me. I lied to those men, but I saved your life. Now, I'll take you to the four-o'clock train, and get you out of this town. By this act I'll incur the hatred of these people that I live amongst. So you let the idea go out that you are my cousin. Sabe? Now, stay right here and I'll bring you anything you want, but for Heaven's sake, don't give me away.'

"Is--is--is the four o'clock train the first out?" inquired the new cousin.

"It is the first. I'll see you through this. I'll come up and see you every hour. Take things cool and easy now. I'm your friend, remember,' was the comfort they parted on.

"There were over seven hundred votes cast, and only one against the bonds. How that one vote got in is yet a mystery. There were no hard drinkers among the boys, all easy drinkers, men that never refused to drink. Yet voting was a little new to them, and possibly that was how this mistake occurred. We got the returns early in the evening. The county had gone by a handsome majority for the bonds. The committee on entertainment had provided a ball for us in the basement of the Opera House, it being the largest room in town. When the good news began to circulate, the merchants began building bonfires. Fellows who didn't have extra togs on for the ball got out their horses, and in squads of twenty to fifty rode through the town, painting her red. If there was one shot fired that night, there were ten thousand.

"I bought a white shirt and went to the ball. To show you how general the good feeling amongst everybody was, I squeezed the hand of an alfalfa widow during a waltz, who instantly reported the affront offered to her gallant. In her presence he took me to task for the offense. 'Young man,' said the doctor, with a quiet wink,' this lady is under my protection. The fourteenth amendment don't apply to you nor me. Six-shooters, however, make us equal. Are you armed?'

"I am, sir.'

"Unfortunately, I am not. Will you kindly excuse me, say ten minutes?'

"Certainly, sir, with pleasure.'

"There are ladies present,' he observed. 'Let us retire.'

"On my consenting, he turned to the offended dame, and in spite of her protests and appeals to drop matters, we left the ballroom, glaring daggers at each other. Once outside, he slapped me on the back, and said, 'Say, we'll just have time to run up to my office, where I have some choice old copper-distilled, sent me by a very dear friend in Kentucky.'

"The goods were all he claimed for them, and on our return he asked me as a personal favor to apologize to the lady, admitting that he was none too solid with her himself. My doing so, he argued, would fortify him with her and wipe out rivals. The doctor was a rattling good fellow, and I'd even taken off my new shirt for him, if he'd said the word. When I made the apology, I did it on the grounds that I could not afford to have any difference, especially with a gentleman who would willingly risk his life for a lady who claimed his protection.

"No, if you never heard of voting the bonds you certainly haven't kept very close tab on affairs in this Strip. Two or three men whom I know refused to go in and vote. They ain't working in this country now. It took some of the boys ten days to go and come, but there wasn't a word said. Wages went on just the same. You ain't asleep, are you, Don Guillermo?"

"Oh, no," said Edwards, with a yawn, "I feel just like the nigger did when he eat his fill of possum, corn bread, and new molasses: pushed the platter away and said, 'Go way, 'lasses, you done los' yo' sweetness.'"

Bradshaw made several attempts to go, but each time some thought would enter his mind and he would return with questions about former acquaintances. Finally he inquired, "What ever became of that little fellow who was sick about your camp?"

Edwards meditated until Mouse said, "He's thinking about little St. John, the fiddler."

"Oh, yes, Patsy St. John, the little glass-blower," said Edwards, as he sat up on a roll of bedding. "He's dead long ago. Died at our camp. I did something for him that I've often wondered who would do the same for me--I closed his eyes when he died. You know he came to us with the mark on his brow. There was no escape; he had consumption. He wanted to live, and struggled hard to avoid going. Until three days before his death he was hopeful; always would tell us how much better he was getting, and every one could see that he was gradually going. We always gave him gentle horses to ride, and he would go with us on trips that we were afraid would be his last. There wasn't a man on the range who ever said 'No' to him. He was one of those little men you can't help but like; small physically, but with a heart as big as an

ox's. He lived about three years on the range, was welcome wherever he went, and never made an enemy or lost a friend. He couldn't; it wasn't in him. I don't remember now how he came to the range, but think he was advised by doctors to lead an outdoor life for a change.

"He was born in the South, and was a glass-blower by occupation. He would have died sooner, but for his pluck and confidence that he would get well. He changed his mind one morning, lost hope that he would ever get well, and died in three days. It was in the spring. We were going out one morning to put in a flood-gate on the river, which had washed away in a freshet. He was ready to go along. He hadn't been on a horse in two weeks. No one ever pretended to notice that he was sick. He was sensitive if you offered any sympathy, so no one offered to assist, except to saddle his horse. The old horse stood like a kitten. Not a man pretended to notice, but we all saw him put his foot in the stirrup three different times and attempt to lift himself into the saddle. He simply lacked the strength. He asked one of the boys to unsaddle the horse, saying he wouldn't go with us. Some of the boys suggested that it was a long ride, and it was best he didn't go, that we would hardly get back until after dark. But we had no idea that he was so near his end. After we left, he went back to the shack and told the cook he had changed his mind,--that he was going to die. That night, when we came back, he was lying on his cot. We all tried to jolly him, but each got the same answer from him, 'I'm going to die.' The outfit to a man was broke up about it, but all kept up a good front. We tried to make him believe it was only one of his bad days, but he knew otherwise. He asked Joe Box and Ham Rhodes, the two biggest men in the outfit, six-footers and an inch each, to sit one on each side of his cot until he went to sleep. He knew better than any of us how near he was to crossing. But it seemed he felt safe between these two giants. We kept up a running conversation in jest with one another, though it was empty mockery. But he never pretended to notice. It was plain to us all that the fear was on him. We kept near the shack the next day, some of the boys always with him. The third evening he seemed to rally, talked with us all, and asked if some of the boys would not play the fiddle. He was a good player himself. Several of the boys played old favorites of his, interspersed with stories and songs, until the evening was passing pleasantly. We were recovering from our despondency with this noticeable recovery on his part, when he whispered to his two big nurses to prop him up. They did so with pillows and parkers, and he actually smiled on us all. He whispered to Joe, who in turn asked the lad sitting on the foot of the cot to play Farewell, my Sunny Southern Home.' Strange we had forgotten that old air,--for it was a general favorite with us,--and stranger now that he should ask for it. As that old familiar air was wafted out from the instrument, he raised his eyes, and seemed to wander in his mind as if trying to follow the refrain. Then something came over him, for he sat up rigid, pointing out his hand at the empty space, and muttered, 'There

stands--mother--now--under--the--oleanders. Who is--that
with--her? Yes, I had--a sister. Open--the--windows.
It--is--getting--dark--dark--dark.'

"Large hands laid him down tenderly, but a fit of coughing came on. He struggled in a hemorrhage for a moment, and then crossed over to the waiting figures among the oleanders. Of all the broke-up outfits, we were the most. Dead tough men bawled like babies. I had a good one myself. When we came around to our senses, we all admitted it was for the best. Since he could not get well, he was better off. We took him next day about ten miles and buried him with those freighters who were killed when the Pawnees raided this country. Some man will plant corn over their graves some day."

As Edwards finished his story, his voice trembled and there were tears in his eyes. A strange silence had come over those gathered about the camp-fire. Mouse, to conceal his emotion, pretended to be asleep, while Bradshaw made an effort to clear his throat of something that would neither go up nor down, and failing in this, turned and walked away without a word. Silently we unrolled the beds, and with saddles for pillows and the dome of heaven for a roof, we fell asleep.



INDIAN SUMMER OF A FORSYTE

the Project Gutenberg EBook of *Five Tales*, by John Galsworthy

"And Summer's lease hath all
too short a date."
--Shakespeare

I

In the last day of May in the early 'nineties, about six o'clock of the evening, old Jolyon Forsyte sat under the oak tree below the terrace of his house at Robin Hill. He was waiting for the midges to bite him, before abandoning the glory of the afternoon. His thin brown hand, where blue veins stood out, held the end of a cigar in its tapering, long-nailed fingers--a pointed polished nail had survived with him from those earlier Victorian days when to touch nothing, even with the tips of the fingers, had been so distinguished. His domed forehead, great white moustache, lean cheeks, and long lean jaw were covered from the

westering sunshine by an old brown Panama hat. His legs were crossed; in all his attitude was serenity and a kind of elegance, as of an old man who every morning put eau de Cologne upon his silk handkerchief. At his feet lay a woolly brown-and-white dog trying to be a Pomeranian--the dog Balthasar between whom and old Jolyon primal aversion had changed into attachment with the years. Close to his chair was a swing, and on the swing was seated one of Holly's dolls--called 'Duffer Alice'--with her body fallen over her legs and her doleful nose buried in a black petticoat. She was never out of disgrace, so it did not matter to her how she sat. Below the oak tree the lawn dipped down a bank, stretched to the fernery, and, beyond that refinement, became fields, dropping to the pond, the coppice, and the prospect--'Fine, remarkable'--at which Swithin Forsyte, from under this very tree, had stared five years ago when he drove down with Irene to look at the house. Old Jolyon had heard of his brother's exploit--that drive which had become quite celebrated on Forsyte 'Change. Swithin! And the fellow had gone and died, last November, at the age of only seventy-nine, renewing the doubt whether Forsytes could live for ever, which had first arisen when Aunt Ann passed away. Died! and left only Jolyon and James, Roger and Nicholas and Timothy, Julia, Hester, Susan! And old Jolyon thought: 'Eighty-five! I don't feel it--except when I get that pain.'

His memory went searching. He had not felt his age since he had bought his nephew Soames' ill-starred house and settled into it here at Robin Hill over three years ago. It was as if he had been getting younger every spring, living in the country with his son and his grandchildren--June, and the little ones of the second marriage, Jolly and Holly; living down here out of the racket of London and the cackle of Forsyte 'Change,' free of his boards, in a delicious atmosphere of no work and all play, with plenty of occupation in the perfecting and mellowing of the house and its twenty acres, and in ministering to the whims of Holly and Jolly. All the knots and crankiness, which had gathered in his heart during that long and tragic business of June, Soames, Irene his wife, and poor young Bosinney, had been smoothed out. Even June had thrown off her melancholy at last--witness this travel in Spain she was taking now with her father and her stepmother. Curiously perfect peace was left by their departure; blissful, yet blank, because his son was not there. Jo was never anything but a comfort and a pleasure to him nowadays--an amiable chap; but women, somehow--even the best--got a little on one's nerves, unless of course one admired them.

Far-off a cuckoo called; a wood-pigeon was cooing from the first elm-tree in the field, and how the daisies and buttercups had sprung up after the last mowing! The wind had got into the sou' west, too--a delicious air, sappy! He pushed his hat back and let the sun fall on his chin and cheek. Somehow, to-day, he wanted company--wanted a pretty face to look at. People treated the old as if they wanted nothing. And with the un-Forsytean philosophy which ever intruded on his soul, he thought: 'ne's never had enough. With a foot in the grave one'll want something,

I shouldn't be surprised!' Down here--away from the exigencies of affairs--his grandchildren, and the flowers, trees, birds of his little domain, to say nothing of sun and moon and stars above them, said, 'pen, sesame,' to him day and night. And sesame had opened--how much, perhaps, he did not know. He had always been responsive to what they had begun to call 'Nature,' genuinely, almost religiously responsive, though he had never lost his habit of calling a sunset a sunset and a view a view, however deeply they might move him. But nowadays Nature actually made him ache, he appreciated it so. Every one of these calm, bright, lengthening days, with Holly's hand in his, and the dog Balthasar in front looking studiously for what he never found, he would stroll, watching the roses open, fruit budding on the walls, sunlight brightening the oak leaves and saplings in the coppice, watching the water-lily leaves unfold and glisten, and the silvery young corn of the one wheat field; listening to the starlings and skylarks, and the Alderney cows chewing the cud, flicking slow their tufted tails; and every one of these fine days he ached a little from sheer love of it all, feeling perhaps, deep down, that he had not very much longer to enjoy it. The thought that some day--perhaps not ten years hence, perhaps not five--all this world would be taken away from him, before he had exhausted his powers of loving it, seemed to him in the nature of an injustice brooding over his horizon. If anything came after this life, it wouldn't be what he wanted; not Robin Hill, and flowers and birds and pretty faces--too few, even now, of those about him! With the years his dislike of humbug had increased; the orthodoxy he had worn in the 'ixties, as he had worn side-whiskers out of sheer exuberance, had long dropped off, leaving him reverent before three things alone--beauty, upright conduct, and the sense of property; and the greatest of these now was beauty. He had always had wide interests, and, indeed could still read The Times, but he was liable at any moment to put it down if he heard a blackbird sing. Upright conduct, property--somehow, they were tiring; the blackbirds and the sunsets never tired him, only gave him an uneasy feeling that he could not get enough of them. Staring into the stilly radiance of the early evening and at the little gold and white flowers on the lawn, a thought came to him: This weather was like the music of 'Orfeo,' which he had recently heard at Covent Garden. A beautiful opera, not like Meyerbeer, nor even quite Mozart, but, in its way, perhaps even more lovely; something classical and of the Golden Age about it, chaste and mellow, and the Ravogli 'almost worthy of the old days'--highest praise he could bestow. The yearning of Orpheus for the beauty he was losing, for his love going down to Hades, as in life love and beauty did go--the yearning which sang and throbbed through the golden music, stirred also in the lingering beauty of the world that evening. And with the tip of his cork-soled, elastic-sided boot he involuntarily stirred the ribs of the dog Balthasar, causing the animal to wake and attack his fleas; for though he was supposed to have none, nothing could persuade him of the fact. When he had finished he rubbed the place he had been scratching against his master's calf, and settled down again with his chin over the instep of the disturbing boot. And

into old Jolyon's mind came a sudden recollection--a face he had seen at that opera three weeks ago--Irene, the wife of his precious nephew Soames, that man of property! Though he had not met her since the day of the 'At Home' in his old house at Stanhope Gate, which celebrated his granddaughter June's ill-starred engagement to young Bosinney, he had remembered her at once, for he had always admired her--a very pretty creature. After the death of young Bosinney, whose mistress she had so reprehensibly become, he had heard that she had left Soames at once. Goodness only knew what she had been doing since. That sight of her face--a side view--in the row in front, had been literally the only reminder these three years that she was still alive. No one ever spoke of her. And yet Jo had told him something once--something which had upset him completely. The boy had got it from George Forsyte, he believed, who had seen Bosinney in the fog the day he was run over--something which explained the young fellow's distress--an act of Soames towards his wife--a shocking act. Jo had seen her, too, that afternoon, after the news was out, seen her for a moment, and his description had always lingered in old Jolyon's mind--'wild and lost' he had called her. And next day June had gone there--bottled up her feelings and gone there, and the maid had cried and told her how her mistress had slipped out in the night and vanished. A tragic business altogether! One thing was certain--Soames had never been able to lay hands on her again. And he was living at Brighton, and journeying up and down--a fitting fate, the man of property! For when he once took a dislike to anyone--as he had to his nephew--old Jolyon never got over it. He remembered still the sense of relief with which he had heard the news of Irene's disappearance. It had been shocking to think of her a prisoner in that house to which she must have wandered back, when Jo saw her, wandered back for a moment--like a wounded animal to its hole after seeing that news, 'Tragic death of an Architect,' in the street. Her face had struck him very much the other night--more beautiful than he had remembered, but like a mask, with something going on beneath it. A young woman still--twenty-eight perhaps. Ah, well! Very likely she had another lover by now. But at this subversive thought--for married women should never love: once, even, had been too much--his instep rose, and with it the dog Balthasar's head. The sagacious animal stood up and looked into old Jolyon's face. 'Walk?' he seemed to say; and old Jolyon answered: "Come on, old chap!"

Slowly, as was their wont, they crossed among the constellations of buttercups and daisies, and entered the fernery. This feature, where very little grew as yet, had been judiciously dropped below the level of the lawn so that it might come up again on the level of the other lawn and give the impression of irregularity, so important in horticulture. Its rocks and earth were beloved of the dog Balthasar, who sometimes found a mole there. Old Jolyon made a point of passing through it because, though it was not beautiful, he intended that it should be, some day, and he would think: 'I must get Varr to come down and look at it; he's better than Beech.' For plants, like houses and human

complaints, required the best expert consideration. It was inhabited by snails, and if accompanied by his grandchildren, he would point to one and tell them the story of the little boy who said: 'Have plummers got leggers, Mother? 'No, sonny.' 'Then darned if I haven't been and swallowed a snileybob.' And when they skipped and clutched his hand, thinking of the snileybob going down the little boy's 'red lane,' his eyes would twinkle. Emerging from the fernery, he opened the wicket gate, which just there led into the first field, a large and park-like area, out of which, within brick walls, the vegetable garden had been carved. Old Jolyon avoided this, which did not suit his mood, and made down the hill towards the pond. Balthasar, who knew a water-rat or two, gambolled in front, at the gait which marks an oldish dog who takes the same walk every day. Arrived at the edge, old Jolyon stood, noting another water-lily opened since yesterday; he would show it to Holly to-morrow, when 'his little sweet' had got over the upset which had followed on her eating a tomato at lunch--her little arrangements were very delicate. Now that Jolly had gone to school--his first term--Holly was with him nearly all day long, and he missed her badly. He felt that pain too, which often bothered him now, a little dragging at his left side. He looked back up the hill. Really, poor young Bosinney had made an uncommonly good job of the house; he would have done very well for himself if he had lived! And where was he now? Perhaps, still haunting this, the site of his last work, of his tragic love affair. Or was Philip Bosinney's spirit diffused in the general? Who could say? That dog was getting his legs muddy! And he moved towards the coppice. There had been the most delightful lot of bluebells, and he knew where some still lingered like little patches of sky fallen in between the trees, away out of the sun. He passed the cow-houses and the hen-houses there installed, and pursued a path into the thick of the saplings, making for one of the bluebell plots. Balthasar, preceding him once more, uttered a low growl. Old Jolyon stirred him with his foot, but the dog remained motionless, just where there was no room to pass, and the hair rose slowly along the centre of his woolly back. Whether from the growl and the look of the dog's stivered hair, or from the sensation which a man feels in a wood, old Jolyon also felt something move along his spine. And then the path turned, and there was an old mossy log, and on it a woman sitting. Her face was turned away, and he had just time to think: 'he's trespassing--I must have a board put up!' before she turned. Powers above! The face he had seen at the opera--the very woman he had just been thinking of! In that confused moment he saw things blurred, as if a spirit--queer effect--the slant of sunlight perhaps on her violet-grey frock! And then she rose and stood smiling, her head a little to one side. Old Jolyon thought: 'How pretty she is!' She did not speak, neither did he; and he realized why with a certain admiration. She was here no doubt because of some memory, and did not mean to try and get out of it by vulgar explanation.

"Don't let that dog touch your frock," he said; "he's got wet feet. Come here, you!"

But the dog Balthasar went on towards the visitor, who put her hand down and stroked his head. Old Jolyon said quickly:

“I saw you at the opera the other night; you didn't notice me.”

“Oh, yes! I did.”

He felt a subtle flattery in that, as though she had added: 'Do you think one could miss seeing you?'

“They're all in Spain,” he remarked abruptly. “I'm alone; I drove up for the opera. The Ravogli's good. Have you seen the cow-houses?”

In a situation so charged with mystery and something very like emotion he moved instinctively towards that bit of property, and she moved beside him. Her figure swayed faintly, like the best kind of French figures; her dress, too, was a sort of French grey. He noticed two or three silver threads in her amber-coloured hair, strange hair with those dark eyes of hers, and that creamy-pale face. A sudden sidelong look from the velvety brown eyes disturbed him. It seemed to come from deep and far, from another world almost, or at all events from some one not living very much in this. And he said mechanically:

“Where are you living now?”

“I have a little flat in Chelsea.”

He did not want to hear what she was doing, did not want to hear anything; but the perverse word came out:

“Alone?”

She nodded. It was a relief to know that. And it came into his mind that, but for a twist of fate, she would have been mistress of this coppice, showing these cow-houses to him, a visitor.

“All Alderneys,” he muttered; “they give the best milk. This one's a pretty creature. Woa, Myrtle!”

The fawn-coloured cow, with eyes as soft and brown as Irene's own, was standing absolutely still, not having long been milked. She looked round at them out of the corner of those lustrous, mild, cynical eyes, and from her grey lips a little dribble of saliva threaded its way towards the straw. The scent of hay and vanilla and ammonia rose in the dim light of the cool cow-house; and old Jolyon said:

“You must come up and have some dinner with me. I'll send you home in the carriage.”

He perceived a struggle going on within her; natural, no doubt, with her memories. But he wanted her company; a pretty face, a charming figure, beauty! He had been alone all the afternoon. Perhaps his eyes were wistful, for she answered: "Thank you, Uncle Jolyon. I should like to."

He rubbed his hands, and said:

"Capital! Let's go up, then!" And, preceded by the dog Balthasar, they ascended through the field. The sun was almost level in their faces now, and he could see, not only those silver threads, but little lines, just deep enough to stamp her beauty with a coin-like fineness--the special look of life unshared with others. "I'll take her in by the terrace," he thought: "I won't make a common visitor of her."

"What do you do all day?" he said.

"Teach music; I have another interest, too."

"Work!" said old Jolyon, picking up the doll from off the swing, and smoothing its black petticoat. "Nothing like it, is there? I don't do any now. I'm getting on. What interest is that?"

"Trying to help women who've come to grief." Old Jolyon did not quite understand. "To grief?" he repeated; then realised with a shock that she meant exactly what he would have meant himself if he had used that expression. Assisting the Magdalenes of London! What a weird and terrifying interest! And, curiosity overcoming his natural shrinking, he asked:

"Why? What do you do for them?"

"Not much. I've no money to spare. I can only give sympathy and food sometimes."

Involuntarily old Jolyon's hand sought his purse. He said hastily: "How d'you get hold of them?"

"I go to a hospital."

"A hospital! Phew!"

"What hurts me most is that once they nearly all had some sort of beauty."

Old Jolyon straightened the doll. "Beauty!" he ejaculated: "Ha! Yes! A sad business!" and he moved towards the house. Through a French window, under sun-blinds not yet drawn up, he preceded her into the room where he was wont to study *The Times* and the sheets of an agricultural

magazine, with huge illustrations of mangold wurzels, and the like, which provided Holly with material for her paint brush.

“Dinner's in half an hour. You'd like to wash your hands! I'll take you to June's room.”

He saw her looking round eagerly; what changes since she had last visited this house with her husband, or her lover, or both perhaps--he did not know, could not say! All that was dark, and he wished to leave it so. But what changes! And in the hall he said:

“My boy Jo's a painter, you know. He's got a lot of taste. It isn't mine, of course, but I've let him have his way.”

She was standing very still, her eyes roaming through the hall and music room, as it now was--all thrown into one, under the great skylight. Old Jolyon had an odd impression of her. Was she trying to conjure somebody from the shades of that space where the colouring was all pearl-grey and silver? He would have had gold himself; more lively and solid. But Jo had French tastes, and it had come out shadowy like that, with an effect as of the fume of cigarettes the chap was always smoking, broken here and there by a little blaze of blue or crimson colour. It was not his dream! Mentally he had hung this space with those gold-framed masterpieces of still and stiller life which he had bought in days when quantity was precious. And now where were they? Sold for a song! That something which made him, alone among Forsytes, move with the times had warned him against the struggle to retain them. But in his study he still had 'Dutch Fishing Boats at Sunset.'

He began to mount the stairs with her, slowly, for he felt his side.

“These are the bathrooms,” he said, “and other arrangements. I've had them tiled. The nurseries are along there. And this is Jo's and his wife's. They all communicate. But you remember, I expect.”

Irene nodded. They passed on, up the gallery and entered a large room with a small bed, and several windows.

“This is mine,” he said. The walls were covered with the photographs of children and watercolour sketches, and he added doubtfully:

“These are Jo's. The view's first-rate. You can see the Grand Stand at Epsom in clear weather.”

The sun was down now, behind the house, and over the 'prospect' a luminous haze had settled, emanation of the long and prosperous day. Few houses showed, but fields and trees faintly glistened, away to a loom of downs.

“The country's changing,” he said abruptly, “but there it'll be when we're all gone. Look at those thrushes--the birds are sweet here in the mornings. I'm glad to have washed my hands of London.”

Her face was close to the window pane, and he was struck by its mournful look. 'Wish I could make her look happy!' he thought. 'A pretty face, but sad!' And taking up his can of hot water he went out into the gallery.

“This is June's room,” he said, opening the next door and putting the can down; “I think you'll find everything.” And closing the door behind her he went back to his own room. Brushing his hair with his great ebony brushes, and dabbing his forehead with eau de Cologne, he mused. She had come so strangely--a sort of visitation; mysterious, even romantic, as if his desire for company, for beauty, had been fulfilled by whatever it was which fulfilled that sort of thing. And before the mirror he straightened his still upright figure, passed the brushes over his great white moustache, touched up his eyebrows with eau de Cologne, and rang the bell.

“I forgot to let them know that I have a lady to dinner with me. Let cook do something extra, and tell Beacon to have the landau and pair at half-past ten to drive her back to Town to-night. Is Miss Holly asleep?”

The maid thought not. And old Jolyon, passing down the gallery, stole on tiptoe towards the nursery, and opened the door whose hinges he kept specially oiled that he might slip in and out in the evenings without being heard.

But Holly was asleep, and lay like a miniature Madonna, of that type which the old painters could not tell from Venus, when they had completed her. Her long dark lashes clung to her cheeks; on her face was perfect peace--her little arrangements were evidently all right again. And old Jolyon, in the twilight of the room, stood adoring her! It was so charming, solemn, and loving--that little face. He had more than his share of the blessed capacity of living again in the young. They were to him his future life--all of a future life that his fundamental pagan sanity perhaps admitted. There she was with everything before her, and his blood--some of it--in her tiny veins. There she was, his little companion, to be made as happy as ever he could make her, so that she knew nothing but love. His heart swelled, and he went out, stilling the sound of his patent-leather boots. In the corridor an eccentric notion attacked him: To think that children should come to that which Irene had told him she was helping! Women who were all, once, little things like this one sleeping there! 'I must give her a cheque!' he mused; 'Can't bear to think of them!' They had never borne reflecting on, those poor outcasts; wounding too deeply the core of true refinement hidden under layers of conformity to the sense of property--wounding too grievously the deepest thing in him--a love of beauty which could give him, even

now, a flutter of the heart, thinking of his evening in the society of a pretty woman. And he went downstairs, through the swinging doors, to the back regions. There, in the wine-cellar, was a hock worth at least two pounds a bottle, a Steinberg Cabinet, better than any Johannisberg that ever went down throat; a wine of perfect bouquet, sweet as a nectarine--nectar indeed! He got a bottle out, handling it like a baby, and holding it level to the light, to look. Enshrined in its coat of dust, that mellow coloured, slender-necked bottle gave him deep pleasure. Three years to settle down again since the move from Town--ought to be in prime condition! Thirty-five years ago he had bought it--thank God he had kept his palate, and earned the right to drink it. She would appreciate this; not a spice of acidity in a dozen. He wiped the bottle, drew the cork with his own hands, put his nose down, inhaled its perfume, and went back to the music room.

Irene was standing by the piano; she had taken off her hat and a lace scarf she had been wearing, so that her gold-coloured hair was visible, and the pallor of her neck. In her grey frock she made a pretty picture for old Jolyon, against the rosewood of the piano.

He gave her his arm, and solemnly they went. The room, which had been designed to enable twenty-four people to dine in comfort, held now but a little round table. In his present solitude the big dining-table oppressed old Jolyon; he had caused it to be removed till his son came back. Here in the company of two really good copies of Raphael Madonnas he was wont to dine alone. It was the only disconsolate hour of his day, this summer weather. He had never been a large eater, like that great chap Swithin, or Sylvanus Heythorp, or Anthony Thornworthy, those cronies of past times; and to dine alone, overlooked by the Madonnas, was to him but a sorrowful occupation, which he got through quickly, that he might come to the more spiritual enjoyment of his coffee and cigar. But this evening was a different matter! His eyes twinkled at her across the little table and he spoke of Italy and Switzerland, telling her stories of his travels there, and other experiences which he could no longer recount to his son and grand-daughter because they knew them. This fresh audience was precious to him; he had never become one of those old men who ramble round and round the fields of reminiscence. Himself quickly fatigued by the insensitive, he instinctively avoided fatiguing others, and his natural flirtatiousness towards beauty guarded him specially in his relations with a woman. He would have liked to draw her out, but though she murmured and smiled and seemed to be enjoying what he told her, he remained conscious of that mysterious remoteness which constituted half her fascination. He could not bear women who threw their shoulders and eyes at you, and chattered away; or hard-mouthed women who laid down the law and knew more than you did. There was only one quality in a woman that appealed to him--charm; and the quieter it was, the more he liked it. And this one had charm, shadowy as afternoon sunlight on those Italian hills and valleys he had loved. The feeling, too, that she was, as it were, apart, cloistered,

made her seem nearer to himself, a strangely desirable companion. When a man is very old and quite out of the running, he loves to feel secure from the rivalries of youth, for he would still be first in the heart of beauty. And he drank his hock, and watched her lips, and felt nearly young. But the dog Balthasar lay watching her lips too, and despising in his heart the interruptions of their talk, and the tilting of those greenish glasses full of a golden fluid which was distasteful to him.

The light was just failing when they went back into the music-room. And, cigar in mouth, old Jolyon said:

“Play me some Chopin.”

By the cigars they smoke, and the composers they love, ye shall know the texture of men's souls. Old Jolyon could not bear a strong cigar or Wagner's music. He loved Beethoven and Mozart, Handel and Gluck, and Schumann, and, for some occult reason, the operas of Meyerbeer; but of late years he had been seduced by Chopin, just as in painting he had succumbed to Botticelli. In yielding to these tastes he had been conscious of divergence from the standard of the Golden Age. Their poetry was not that of Milton and Byron and Tennyson; of Raphael and Titian; Mozart and Beethoven. It was, as it were, behind a veil; their poetry hit no one in the face, but slipped its fingers under the ribs and turned and twisted, and melted up the heart. And, never certain that this was healthy, he did not care a rap so long as he could see the pictures of the one or hear the music of the other.

Irene sat down at the piano under the electric lamp festooned with pearl-grey, and old Jolyon, in an armchair, whence he could see her, crossed his legs and drew slowly at his cigar. She sat a few moments with her hands on the keys, evidently searching her mind for what to give him. Then she began and within old Jolyon there arose a sorrowful pleasure, not quite like anything else in the world. He fell slowly into a trance, interrupted only by the movements of taking the cigar out of his mouth at long intervals, and replacing it. She was there, and the hock within him, and the scent of tobacco; but there, too, was a world of sunshine lingering into moonlight, and pools with storks upon them, and bluish trees above, glowing with blurs of wine-red roses, and fields of lavender where milk-white cows were grazing, and a woman all shadowy, with dark eyes and a white neck, smiled, holding out her arms; and through air which was like music a star dropped and was caught on a cow's horn. He opened his eyes. Beautiful piece; she played well--the touch of an angel! And he closed them again. He felt miraculously sad and happy, as one does, standing under a lime-tree in full honey flower. Not live one's own life again, but just stand there and bask in the smile of a woman's eyes, and enjoy the bouquet! And he jerked his hand; the dog Balthasar had reached up and licked it.

“Beautiful!” He said: “Go on--more Chopin!”

She began to play again. This time the resemblance between her and 'hopin' struck him. The swaying he had noticed in her walk was in her playing too, and the Nocturne she had chosen and the soft darkness of her eyes, the light on her hair, as of moonlight from a golden moon. Seductive, yes; but nothing of Delilah in her or in that music. A long blue spiral from his cigar ascended and dispersed. 'So we go out!' he thought. 'No more beauty! Nothing?'

Again Irene stopped.

“Would you like some Gluck? He used to write his music in a sunlit garden, with a bottle of Rhine wine beside him.”

“Ah! yes. Let's have 'Orfeo.'. Round about him now were fields of gold and silver flowers, white forms swaying in the sunlight, bright birds flying to and fro. All was summer. Lingering waves of sweetness and regret flooded his soul. Some cigar ash dropped, and taking out a silk handkerchief to brush it off, he inhaled a mingled scent as of snuff and eau de Cologne. 'Ah!' he thought, 'Indian summer--that's all!' and he said: “You haven't played me 'Che faro.'.

She did not answer; did not move. He was conscious of something--some strange upset. Suddenly he saw her rise and turn away, and a pang of remorse shot through him. What a clumsy chap! Like Orpheus, she of course--she too was looking for her lost one in the hall of memory! And disturbed to the heart, he got up from his chair. She had gone to the great window at the far end. Gingerly he followed. Her hands were folded over her breast; he could just see her cheek, very white. And, quite emotionalized, he said:

“There, there, my love!” The words had escaped him mechanically, for they were those he used to Holly when she had a pain, but their effect was instantaneously distressing. She raised her arms, covered her face with them, and wept.

Old Jolyon stood gazing at her with eyes very deep from age. The passionate shame she seemed feeling at her abandonment, so unlike the control and quietude of her whole presence was as if she had never before broken down in the presence of another being.

“There, there--there, there!” he murmured, and putting his hand out reverently, touched her. She turned, and leaned the arms which covered her face against him. Old Jolyon stood very still, keeping one thin hand on her shoulder. Let her cry her heart out--it would do her good.

And the dog Balthasar, puzzled, sat down on his stern to examine them.

The window was still open, the curtains had not been drawn, the last of

daylight from without mingled with faint intrusion from the lamp within; there was a scent of new-mown grass. With the wisdom of a long life old Jolyon did not speak. Even grief sobbed itself out in time; only Time was good for sorrow--Time who saw the passing of each mood, each emotion in turn; Time the layer-to-rest. There came into his mind the words: 'As panteth the hart after cooling streams'--but they were of no use to him. Then, conscious of a scent of violets, he knew she was drying her eyes. He put his chin forward, pressed his moustache against her forehead, and felt her shake with a quivering of her whole body, as of a tree which shakes itself free of raindrops. She put his hand to her lips, as if saying: "All over now! Forgive me!"

The kiss filled him with a strange comfort; he led her back to where she had been so upset. And the dog Balthasar, following, laid the bone of one of the cutlets they had eaten at their feet.

Anxious to obliterate the memory of that emotion, he could think of nothing better than china; and moving with her slowly from cabinet to cabinet, he kept taking up bits of Dresden and Lowestoft and Chelsea, turning them round and round with his thin, veined hands, whose skin, faintly freckled, had such an aged look.

"I bought this at Jobson's," he would say; "cost me thirty pounds. It's very old. That dog leaves his bones all over the place. This old 'hip-bowl' I picked up at the sale when that precious rip, the Marquis, came to grief. But you don't remember. Here's a nice piece of Chelsea. Now, what would you say this was?" And he was comforted, feeling that, with her taste, she was taking a real interest in these things; for, after all, nothing better composes the nerves than a doubtful piece of china.

When the crunch of the carriage wheels was heard at last, he said:

"You must come again; you must come to lunch, then I can show you these by daylight, and my little sweet--she's a dear little thing. This dog seems to have taken a fancy to you."

For Balthasar, feeling that she was about to leave, was rubbing his side against her leg. Going out under the porch with her, he said:

"He'll get you up in an hour and a quarter. Take this for your proteges," and he slipped a cheque for fifty pounds into her hand. He saw her brightened eyes, and heard her murmur: "Oh! Uncle Jolyon!" and a real throb of pleasure went through him. That meant one or two poor creatures helped a little, and it meant that she would come again. He put his hand in at the window and grasped hers once more. The carriage rolled away. He stood looking at the moon and the shadows of the trees, and thought: 'A sweet night! She...!'

II

Two days of rain, and summer set in bland and sunny. Old Jolyon walked and talked with Holly. At first he felt taller and full of a new vigour; then he felt restless. Almost every afternoon they would enter the coppice, and walk as far as the log. 'Well, she's not there!' he would think, 'of course not!' And he would feel a little shorter, and drag his feet walking up the hill home, with his hand clapped to his left side. Now and then the thought would move in him: 'Did she come--or did I dream it?' and he would stare at space, while the dog Balthasar stared at him. Of course she would not come again! He opened the letters from Spain with less excitement. They were not returning till July; he felt, oddly, that he could bear it. Every day at dinner he screwed up his eyes and looked at where she had sat. She was not there, so he unscrewed his eyes again.

On the seventh afternoon he thought: 'I must go up and get some boots.' He ordered Beacon, and set out. Passing from Putney towards Hyde Park he reflected: 'I might as well go to Chelsea and see her.' And he called out: "Just drive me to where you took that lady the other night." The coachman turned his broad red face, and his juicy lips answered: "The lady in grey, sir?"

"Yes, the lady in grey." What other ladies were there! Stodgy chap!

The carriage stopped before a small three-storied block of flats, standing a little back from the river. With a practised eye old Jolyon saw that they were cheap. 'I should think about sixty pound a year,' he mused; and entering, he looked at the name-board. The name 'Forsyte' was not on it, but against 'First Floor, Flat C' were the words: 'Mrs. Irene Heron.' Ah! She had taken her maiden name again! And somehow this pleased him. He went upstairs slowly, feeling his side a little. He stood a moment, before ringing, to lose the feeling of drag and fluttering there. She would not be in! And then--Boots! The thought was black. What did he want with boots at his age? He could not wear out all those he had.

"Your mistress at home?"

"Yes, sir."

"Say Mr. Jolyon Forsyte."

"Yes, sir, will you come this way?"

Old Jolyon followed a very little maid--not more than sixteen one would

say--into a very small drawing-room where the sun-blinds were drawn. It held a cottage piano and little else save a vague fragrance and good taste. He stood in the middle, with his top hat in his hand, and thought: 'I expect she's very badly off!' There was a mirror above the fireplace, and he saw himself reflected. An old-looking chap! He heard a rustle, and turned round. She was so close that his moustache almost brushed her forehead, just under her hair.

"I was driving up," he said. "Thought I'd look in on you, and ask you how you got up the other night."

And, seeing her smile, he felt suddenly relieved. She was really glad to see him, perhaps.

"Would you like to put on your hat and come for a drive in the Park?"

But while she was gone to put her hat on, he frowned. The Park! James and Emily! Mrs. Nicholas, or some other member of his precious family would be there very likely, prancing up and down. And they would go and wag their tongues about having seen him with her, afterwards. Better not! He did not wish to revive the echoes of the past on Forsyte 'Change. He removed a white hair from the lapel of his closely-buttoned-up frock coat, and passed his hand over his cheeks, moustache, and square chin. It felt very hollow there under the cheekbones. He had not been eating much lately--he had better get that little whippersnapper who attended Holly to give him a tonic. But she had come back and when they were in the carriage, he said:

"Suppose we go and sit in Kensington Gardens instead?" and added with a twinkle: "No prancing up and down there," as if she had been in the secret of his thoughts.

Leaving the carriage, they entered those select precincts, and strolled towards the water.

"You've gone back to your maiden name, I see," he said: "I'm not sorry."

She slipped her hand under his arm: "Has June forgiven me, Uncle Jolyon?"

He answered gently: "Yes--yes; of course, why not?"

"And have you?"

"I? I forgave you as soon as I saw how the land really lay." And perhaps he had; his instinct had always been to forgive the beautiful.

She drew a deep breath. "I never regretted--I couldn't. Did you ever love very deeply, Uncle Jolyon?"

At that strange question old Jolyon stared before him. Had he? He did not seem to remember that he ever had. But he did not like to say this to the young woman whose hand was touching his arm, whose life was suspended, as it were, by memory of a tragic love. And he thought: 'If I had met you when I was young I--I might have made a fool of myself, perhaps.' And a longing to escape in generalities beset him.

"Love's a queer thing," he said, "fatal thing often. It was the Greeks--wasn't it?--made love into a goddess; they were right, I dare say, but then they lived in the Golden Age."

"Phil adored them."

Phil! The word jarred him, for suddenly--with his power to see all round a thing, he perceived why she was putting up with him like this. She wanted to talk about her lover! Well! If it was any pleasure to her! And he said: "Ah! There was a bit of the sculptor in him, I fancy."

"Yes. He loved balance and symmetry; he loved the whole-hearted way the Greeks gave themselves to art."

Balance! The chap had no balance at all, if he remembered; as for symmetry--clean-built enough he was, no doubt; but those queer eyes of his, and high cheek-bones--Symmetry?

"You're of the Golden Age, too, Uncle Jolyon."

Old Jolyon looked round at her. Was she chaffing him? No, her eyes were soft as velvet. Was she flattering him? But if so, why? There was nothing to be had out of an old chap like him.

"Phil thought so. He used to say: 'But I can never tell him that I admire him.'"

Ah! There it was again. Her dead lover; her desire to talk of him! And he pressed her arm, half resentful of those memories, half grateful, as if he recognised what a link they were between herself and him.

"He was a very talented young fellow," he murmured. "It's hot; I feel the heat nowadays. Let's sit down."

They took two chairs beneath a chestnut tree whose broad leaves covered them from the peaceful glory of the afternoon. A pleasure to sit there and watch her, and feel that she liked to be with him. And the wish to increase that liking, if he could, made him go on:

"I expect he showed you a side of him I never saw. He'd be at his best with you. His ideas of art were a little new--to me "--he had stifled

the word 'fangled.'

“Yes: but he used to say you had a real sense of beauty.” Old Jolyon thought: 'The devil he did!' but answered with a twinkle: “Well, I have, or I shouldn't be sitting here with you.” She was fascinating when she smiled with her eyes, like that!

“He thought you had one of those hearts that never grow old. Phil had real insight.”

He was not taken in by this flattery spoken out of the past, out of a longing to talk of her dead lover--not a bit; and yet it was precious to hear, because she pleased his eyes and heart which--quite true!--had never grown old. Was that because--unlike her and her dead lover, he had never loved to desperation, had always kept his balance, his sense of symmetry. Well! It had left him power, at eighty-four, to admire beauty. And he thought, 'If I were a painter or a sculptor! But I'm an old chap. Make hay while the sun shines.'

A couple with arms entwined crossed on the grass before them, at the edge of the shadow from their tree. The sunlight fell cruelly on their pale, squashed, unkempt young faces. “We're an ugly lot!” said old Jolyon suddenly. “It amazes me to see how--love triumphs over that.”

“Love triumphs over everything!”

“The young think so,” he muttered.

“Love has no age, no limit, and no death.”

With that glow in her pale face, her breast heaving, her eyes so large and dark and soft, she looked like Venus come to life! But this extravagance brought instant reaction, and, twinkling, he said: “Well, if it had limits, we shouldn't be born; for by George! it's got a lot to put up with.”

Then, removing his top hat, he brushed it round with a cuff. The great clumsy thing heated his forehead; in these days he often got a rush of blood to the head--his circulation was not what it had been.

She still sat gazing straight before her, and suddenly she murmured:

“It's strange enough that I'm alive.”

Those words of Jo's 'Wild and lost' came back to him.

“Ah!” he said: “my son saw you for a moment--that day.”

“Was it your son? I heard a voice in the hall; I thought for a second it

was--Phil."

Old Jolyon saw her lips tremble. She put her hand over them, took it away again, and went on calmly: "That night I went to the Embankment; a woman caught me by the dress. She told me about herself. When one knows that others suffer, one's ashamed."

"One of those?"

She nodded, and horror stirred within old Jolyon, the horror of one who has never known a struggle with desperation. Almost against his will he muttered: "Tell me, won't you?"

"I didn't care whether I lived or died. When you're like that, Fate ceases to want to kill you. She took care of me three days--she never left me. I had no money. That's why I do what I can for them, now."

But old Jolyon was thinking: 'No money!' What fate could compare with that? Every other was involved in it.

"I wish you had come to me," he said. "Why didn't you?" But Irene did not answer.

"Because my name was Forsyte, I suppose? Or was it June who kept you away? How are you getting on now?" His eyes involuntarily swept her body. Perhaps even now she was--! And yet she wasn't thin--not really!

"Oh! with my fifty pounds a year, I make just enough." The answer did not reassure him; he had lost confidence. And that fellow Soames! But his sense of justice stifled condemnation. No, she would certainly have died rather than take another penny from him. Soft as she looked, there must be strength in her somewhere--strength and fidelity. But what business had young Bosinney to have got run over and left her stranded like this!

"Well, you must come to me now," he said, "for anything you want, or I shall be quite cut up." And putting on his hat, he rose. "Let's go and get some tea. I told that lazy chap to put the horses up for an hour, and come for me at your place. We'll take a cab presently; I can't walk as I used to."

He enjoyed that stroll to the Kensington end of the gardens--the sound of her voice, the glancing of her eyes, the subtle beauty of a charming form moving beside him. He enjoyed their tea at Ruffel's in the High Street, and came out thence with a great box of chocolates swung on his little finger. He enjoyed the drive back to Chelsea in a hansom, smoking his cigar. She had promised to come down next Sunday and play to him again, and already in thought he was plucking carnations and early roses for her to carry back to town. It was a pleasure to give her a little

pleasure, if it WERE pleasure from an old chap like him! The carriage was already there when they arrived. Just like that fellow, who was always late when he was wanted! Old Jolyon went in for a minute to say good-bye. The little dark hall of the flat was impregnated with a disagreeable odour of patchouli, and on a bench against the wall--its only furniture--he saw a figure sitting. He heard Irene say softly: "Just one minute." In the little drawing-room when the door was shut, he asked gravely: "One of your proteges?"

"Yes. Now thanks to you, I can do something for her."

He stood, staring, and stroking that chin whose strength had frightened so many in its time. The idea of her thus actually in contact with this outcast grieved and frightened him. What could she do for them? Nothing. Only soil and make trouble for herself, perhaps. And he said: "Take care, my dear! The world puts the worst construction on everything."

"I know that."

He was abashed by her quiet smile. "Well then--Sunday," he murmured: "Good-bye."

She put her cheek forward for him to kiss.

"Good-bye," he said again; "take care of yourself." And he went out, not looking towards the figure on the bench. He drove home by way of Hammersmith; that he might stop at a place he knew of and tell them to send her in two dozen of their best Burgundy. She must want picking-up sometimes! Only in Richmond Park did he remember that he had gone up to order himself some boots, and was surprised that he could have had so paltry an idea.

III

The little spirits of the past which throng an old man's days had never pushed their faces up to his so seldom as in the seventy hours elapsing before Sunday came. The spirit of the future, with the charm of the unknown, put up her lips instead. Old Jolyon was not restless now, and paid no visits to the log, because she was coming to lunch. There is wonderful finality about a meal; it removes a world of doubts, for no one misses meals except for reasons beyond control. He played many games with Holly on the lawn, pitching them up to her who was batting so as to be ready to bowl to Jolly in the holidays. For she was not a Forsyte, but Jolly was--and Forsytes always bat, until they have resigned and reached the age of eighty-five. The dog Balthazar, in attendance, lay on the ball as often as he could, and the page-boy fielded, till his face

was like the harvest moon. And because the time was getting shorter, each day was longer and more golden than the last. On Friday night he took a liver pill, his side hurt him rather, and though it was not the liver side, there is no remedy like that. Anyone telling him that he had found a new excitement in life and that excitement was not good for him, would have been met by one of those steady and rather defiant looks of his deep-set iron-grey eyes, which seemed to say: 'I know my own business best.' He always had and always would.

On Sunday morning, when Holly had gone with her governess to church, he visited the strawberry beds. There, accompanied by the dog Balthasar, he examined the plants narrowly and succeeded in finding at least two dozen berries which were really ripe. Stooping was not good for him, and he became very dizzy and red in the forehead. Having placed the strawberries in a dish on the dining-table, he washed his hands and bathed his forehead with eau de Cologne. There, before the mirror, it occurred to him that he was thinner. What a 'threadpaper' he had been when he was young! It was nice to be slim--he could not bear a fat chap; and yet perhaps his cheeks were too thin! She was to arrive by train at half-past twelve and walk up, entering from the road past Drage's farm at the far end of the coppice. And, having looked into June's room to see that there was hot water ready, he set forth to meet her, leisurely, for his heart was beating. The air smelled sweet, larks sang, and the Grand Stand at Epsom was visible. A perfect day! On just such a one, no doubt, six years ago, Soames had brought young Bosinney down with him to look at the site before they began to build. It was Bosinney who had pitched on the exact spot for the house--as June had often told him. In these days he was thinking much about that young fellow, as if his spirit were really haunting the field of his last work, on the chance of seeing--her. Bosinney--the one man who had possessed her heart, to whom she had given her whole self with rapture! At his age one could not, of course, imagine such things, but there stirred in him a queer vague aching--as it were the ghost of an impersonal jealousy; and a feeling, too, more generous, of pity for that love so early lost. All over in a few poor months! Well, well! He looked at his watch before entering the coppice--only a quarter past, twenty-five minutes to wait! And then, turning the corner of the path, he saw her exactly where he had seen her the first time, on the log; and realised that she must have come by the earlier train to sit there alone for a couple of hours at least. Two hours of her society missed! What memory could make that log so dear to her? His face showed what he was thinking, for she said at once:

"Forgive me, Uncle Jolyon; it was here that I first knew."

"Yes, yes; there it is for you whenever you like. You're looking a little Londony; you're giving too many lessons."

That she should have to give lessons worried him. Lessons to a parcel of young girls thumping out scales with their thick fingers.

“Where do you go to give them?” he asked.

“They're mostly Jewish families, luckily.”

Old Jolyon stared; to all Forsytes Jews seem strange and doubtful.

“They love music, and they're very kind.”

“They had better be, by George!” He took her arm--his side always hurt him a little going uphill--and said:

“Did you ever see anything like those buttercups? They came like that in a night.”

Her eyes seemed really to fly over the field, like bees after the flowers and the honey. “I wanted you to see them--wouldn't let them turn the cows in yet.” Then, remembering that she had come to talk about Bosinney, he pointed to the clock-tower over the stables:

“I expect he wouldn't have let me put that there--had no notion of time, if I remember.”

But, pressing his arm to her, she talked of flowers instead, and he knew it was done that he might not feel she came because of her dead lover.

“The best flower I can show you,” he said, with a sort of triumph, “is my little sweet. She'll be back from Church directly. There's something about her which reminds me a little of you,” and it did not seem to him peculiar that he had put it thus, instead of saying: “There's something about you which reminds me a little of her.” Ah! And here she was!

Holly, followed closely by her elderly French governess, whose digestion had been ruined twenty-two years ago in the siege of Strasbourg, came rushing towards them from under the oak tree. She stopped about a dozen yards away, to pat Balthasar and pretend that this was all she had in her mind. Old Jolyon, who knew better, said:

“Well, my darling, here's the lady in grey I promised you.”

Holly raised herself and looked up. He watched the two of them with a twinkle, Irene smiling, Holly beginning with grave inquiry, passing into a shy smile too, and then to something deeper. She had a sense of beauty, that child--knew what was what! He enjoyed the sight of the kiss between them.

“Mrs. Heron, Mam'zelle Beauce. Well, Mam'zelle--good sermon?”

For, now that he had not much more time before him, the only part of

the service connected with this world absorbed what interest in church remained to him. Mam'zelle Beauce stretched out a spidery hand clad in a black kid glove--she had been in the best families--and the rather sad eyes of her lean yellowish face seemed to ask: "Are you well-brrred?"

Whenever Holly or Jolly did anything unpleasing to her--a not uncommon occurrence--she would say to them: "The little Tayleurs never did that--they were such well-brrred little children." Jolly hated the little Tayleurs; Holly wondered dreadfully how it was she fell so short of them. 'A thin rum little soul,' old Jolyon thought her--Mam'zelle Beauce.

Luncheon was a successful meal, the mushrooms which he himself had picked in the mushroom house, his chosen strawberries, and another bottle of the Steinberg cabinet filled him with a certain aromatic spirituality, and a conviction that he would have a touch of eczema to-morrow.

After lunch they sat under the oak tree drinking Turkish coffee. It was no matter of grief to him when Mademoiselle Beauce withdrew to write her Sunday letter to her sister, whose future had been endangered in the past by swallowing a pin--an event held up daily in warning to the children to eat slowly and digest what they had eaten. At the foot of the bank, on a carriage rug, Holly and the dog Balthasar teased and loved each other, and in the shade old Jolyon with his legs crossed and his cigar luxuriously savoured, gazed at Irene sitting in the swing. A light, vaguely swaying, grey figure with a fleck of sunlight here and there upon it, lips just opened, eyes dark and soft under lids a little drooped. She looked content; surely it did her good to come and see him! The selfishness of age had not set its proper grip on him, for he could still feel pleasure in the pleasure of others, realising that what he wanted, though much, was not quite all that mattered.

"It's quiet here," he said; "you mustn't come down if you find it dull. But it's a pleasure to see you. My little sweet is the only face which gives me any pleasure, except yours."

From her smile he knew that she was not beyond liking to be appreciated, and this reassured him. "That's not humbug," he said. "I never told a woman I admired her when I didn't. In fact I don't know when I've told a woman I admired her, except my wife in the old days; and wives are funny." He was silent, but resumed abruptly:

"She used to expect me to say it more often than I felt it, and there we were." Her face looked mysteriously troubled, and, afraid that he had said something painful, he hurried on: "When my little sweet marries, I hope she'll find someone who knows what women feel. I shan't be here to see it, but there's too much topsy-turvydom in marriage; I don't want her to pitch up against that." And, aware that he had made bad worse, he added: "That dog will scratch."

A silence followed. Of what was she thinking, this pretty creature whose life was spoiled; who had done with love, and yet was made for love? Some day when he was gone, perhaps, she would find another mate--not so disorderly as that young fellow who had got himself run over. Ah! but her husband?

“Does Soames never trouble you?” he asked.

She shook her head. Her face had closed up suddenly. For all her softness there was something irreconcilable about her. And a glimpse of light on the inexorable nature of sex antipathies strayed into a brain which, belonging to early Victorian civilisation--so much older than this of his old age--had never thought about such primitive things.

“That's a comfort,” he said. “You can see the Grand Stand to-day. Shall we take a turn round?”

Through the flower and fruit garden, against whose high outer walls peach trees and nectarines were trained to the sun, through the stables, the vinery, the mushroom house, the asparagus beds, the rosery, the summer-house, he conducted her--even into the kitchen garden to see the tiny green peas which Holly loved to scoop out of their pods with her finger, and lick up from the palm of her little brown hand. Many delightful things he showed her, while Holly and the dog Balthasar danced ahead, or came to them at intervals for attention. It was one of the happiest afternoons he had ever spent, but it tired him and he was glad to sit down in the music room and let her give him tea. A special little friend of Holly's had come in--a fair child with short hair like a boy's. And the two sported in the distance, under the stairs, on the stairs, and up in the gallery. Old Jolyon begged for Chopin. She played studies, mazurkas, waltzes, till the two children, creeping near, stood at the foot of the piano their dark and golden heads bent forward, listening. Old Jolyon watched.

“Let's see you dance, you two!”

Shyly, with a false start, they began. Bobbing and circling, earnest, not very adroit, they went past and past his chair to the strains of that waltz. He watched them and the face of her who was playing turned smiling towards those little dancers thinking:

'sweetest picture I've seen for ages.'

A voice said:

“Hollée! Mais enfin--qu'est-ce que tu fais la--danser, le dimanche! Viens, donc!”

But the children came close to old Jolyon, knowing that he would save them, and gazed into a face which was decidedly 'caught out.'

"Better the day, better the deed, Mam'zelle. It's all my doing. Trot along, chicks, and have your tea."

And, when they were gone, followed by the dog Balthasar, who took every meal, he looked at Irene with a twinkle and said:

"Well, there we are! Aren't they sweet? Have you any little ones among your pupils?"

"Yes, three--two of them darlings."

"Pretty?"

"Lovely!"

Old Jolyon sighed; he had an insatiable appetite for the very young. "My little sweet," he said, "is devoted to music; she'll be a musician some day. You wouldn't give me your opinion of her playing, I suppose?"

"Of course I will."

"You wouldn't like--" but he stifled the words "to give her lessons."

The idea that she gave lessons was unpleasant to him; yet it would mean that he would see her regularly. She left the piano and came over to his chair.

"I would like, very much; but there is--June. When are they coming back?"

Old Jolyon frowned. "Not till the middle of next month. What does that matter?"

"You said June had forgiven me; but she could never forget, Uncle Jolyon."

Forget! She must forget, if he wanted her to.

But as if answering, Irene shook her head. "You know she couldn't; one doesn't forget."

Always that wretched past! And he said with a sort of vexed finality:

"Well, we shall see."

He talked to her an hour or more, of the children, and a hundred little things, till the carriage came round to take her home. And when she had

gone he went back to his chair, and sat there smoothing his face and chin, dreaming over the day.

That evening after dinner he went to his study and took a sheet of paper. He stayed for some minutes without writing, then rose and stood under the masterpiece 'Dutch Fishing Boats at Sunset.' He was not thinking of that picture, but of his life. He was going to leave her something in his Will; nothing could so have stirred the stilly deeps of thought and memory. He was going to leave her a portion of his wealth, of his aspirations, deeds, qualities, work--all that had made that wealth; going to leave her, too, a part of all he had missed in life, by his sane and steady pursuit of wealth. All! What had he missed? 'Dutch Fishing Boats' responded blankly; he crossed to the French window, and drawing the curtain aside, opened it. A wind had got up, and one of last year's oak leaves which had somehow survived the gardener's brooms, was dragging itself with a tiny clicking rustle along the stone terrace in the twilight. Except for that it was very quiet out there, and he could smell the heliotrope watered not long since. A bat went by. A bird uttered its last 'cheep.' And right above the oak tree the first star shone. Faust in the opera had bartered his soul for some fresh years of youth. Morbid notion! No such bargain was possible, that was real tragedy! No making oneself new again for love or life or anything. Nothing left to do but enjoy beauty from afar off while you could, and leave it something in your Will. But how much? And, as if he could not make that calculation looking out into the mild freedom of the country night, he turned back and went up to the chimney-piece. There were his pet bronzes--a Cleopatra with the asp at her breast; a Socrates; a greyhound playing with her puppy; a strong man reining in some horses. 'hey last!' he thought, and a pang went through his heart. They had a thousand years of life before them!

'ow much?' Well! enough at all events to save her getting old before her time, to keep the lines out of her face as long as possible, and grey from soiling that bright hair. He might live another five years. She would be well over thirty by then. 'How much?' She had none of his blood in her! In loyalty to the tenor of his life for forty years and more, ever since he married and founded that mysterious thing, a family, came this warning thought--None of his blood, no right to anything! It was a luxury then, this notion. An extravagance, a petting of an old man's whim, one of those things done in dotage. His real future was vested in those who had his blood, in whom he would live on when he was gone. He turned away from the bronzes and stood looking at the old leather chair in which he had sat and smoked so many hundreds of cigars. And suddenly he seemed to see her sitting there in her grey dress, fragrant, soft, dark-eyed, graceful, looking up at him. Why! She cared nothing for him, really; all she cared for was that lost lover of hers. But she was there, whether she would or no, giving him pleasure with her beauty and grace. One had no right to inflict an old man's company, no right to ask her down to play to him and let him look at her--for no

reward! Pleasure must be paid for in this world. 'How much?' After all, there was plenty; his son and his three grandchildren would never miss that little lump. He had made it himself, nearly every penny; he could leave it where he liked, allow himself this little pleasure. He went back to the bureau. 'Well, I'm going to,' he thought, 'let them think what they like. I'm going to!' And he sat down.

'How much?' Ten thousand, twenty thousand--how much? If only with his money he could buy one year, one month of youth. And startled by that thought, he wrote quickly:

'EAR HERRING,--Draw me a codicil to this effect: "I leave to my niece Irene Forsyte, born Irene Heron, by which name she now goes, fifteen thousand pounds free of legacy duty." 'Yours faithfully, 'JOLYON FORSYTE.'

When he had sealed and stamped the envelope, he went back to the window and drew in a long breath. It was dark, but many stars shone now.

IV

He woke at half-past two, an hour which long experience had taught him brings panic intensity to all awkward thoughts. Experience had also taught him that a further waking at the proper hour of eight showed the folly of such panic. On this particular morning the thought which gathered rapid momentum was that if he became ill, at his age not improbable, he would not see her. From this it was but a step to realisation that he would be cut off, too, when his son and June returned from Spain. How could he justify desire for the company of one who had stolen--early morning does not mince words--June's lover? That lover was dead; but June was a stubborn little thing; warm-hearted, but stubborn as wood, and--quite true--not one who forgot! By the middle of next month they would be back. He had barely five weeks left to enjoy the new interest which had come into what remained of his life. Darkness showed up to him absurdly clear the nature of his feeling. Admiration for beauty--a craving to see that which delighted his eyes.

Preposterous, at his age! And yet--what other reason was there for asking June to undergo such painful reminder, and how prevent his son and his son's wife from thinking him very queer? He would be reduced to sneaking up to London, which tired him; and the least indisposition would cut him off even from that. He lay with eyes open, setting his jaw against the prospect, and calling himself an old fool, while his heart beat loudly, and then seemed to stop beating altogether. He had seen the dawn lighting the window chinks, heard the birds chirp and twitter, and the cocks crow, before he fell asleep again, and awoke tired but sane.

Five weeks before he need bother, at his age an eternity! But that early morning panic had left its mark, had slightly fevered the will of one who had always had his own way. He would see her as often as he wished! Why not go up to town and make that codicil at his solicitor's instead of writing about it; she might like to go to the opera! But, by train, for he would not have that fat chap Beacon grinning behind his back. Servants were such fools; and, as likely as not, they had known all the past history of Irene and young Bosinney--servants knew everything, and suspected the rest. He wrote to her that morning:

“MY DEAR IRENE,--I have to be up in town to-morrow. If you would like to have a look in at the opera, come and dine with me quietly”

But where? It was decades since he had dined anywhere in London save at his Club or at a private house. Ah! that new-fangled place close to Covent Garden....

“Let me have a line to-morrow morning to the Piedmont Hotel whether to expect you there at 7 o'clock.”

“Yours affectionately,

“JOLYON FORSYTE.”

She would understand that he just wanted to give her a little pleasure; for the idea that she should guess he had this itch to see her was instinctively unpleasant to him; it was not seemly that one so old should go out of his way to see beauty, especially in a woman.

The journey next day, short though it was, and the visit to his lawyer's, tired him. It was hot too, and after dressing for dinner he lay down on the sofa in his bedroom to rest a little. He must have had a sort of fainting fit, for he came to himself feeling very queer; and with some difficulty rose and rang the bell. Why! it was past seven! And there he was and she would be waiting. But suddenly the dizziness came on again, and he was obliged to relapse on the sofa. He heard the maid's voice say:

“Did you ring, sir?”

“Yes, come here”; he could not see her clearly, for the cloud in front of his eyes. “I'm not well, I want some sal volatile.”

“Yes, sir.” Her voice sounded frightened.

Old Jolyon made an effort.

“Don't go. Take this message to my niece--a lady waiting in the hall--a lady in grey. Say Mr. Forsyte is not well--the heat. He is very sorry; if he is not down directly, she is not to wait dinner.”

When she was gone, he thought feebly: 'Why did I say a lady in grey--she may be in anything. Sal volatile!' He did not go off again, yet was not conscious of how Irene came to be standing beside him, holding smelling salts to his nose, and pushing a pillow up behind his head. He heard her say anxiously: “Dear Uncle Jolyon, what is it?” was dimly conscious of the soft pressure of her lips on his hand; then drew a long breath of smelling salts, suddenly discovered strength in them, and sneezed.

“Ha!” he said, “it's nothing. How did you get here? Go down and dine--the tickets are on the dressing-table. I shall be all right in a minute.”

He felt her cool hand on his forehead, smelled violets, and sat divided between a sort of pleasure and a determination to be all right.

“Why! You are in grey!” he said. “Help me up.” Once on his feet he gave himself a shake.

“What business had I to go off like that!” And he moved very slowly to the glass. What a cadaverous chap! Her voice, behind him, murmured:

“You mustn't come down, Uncle; you must rest.”

“Fiddlesticks! A glass of champagne'll soon set me to rights. I can't have you missing the opera.”

But the journey down the corridor was troublesome. What carpets they had in these newfangled places, so thick that you tripped up in them at every step! In the lift he noticed how concerned she looked, and said with the ghost of a twinkle:

“I'm a pretty host.”

When the lift stopped he had to hold firmly to the seat to prevent its slipping under him; but after soup and a glass of champagne he felt much better, and began to enjoy an infirmity which had brought such solicitude into her manner towards him.

“I should have liked you for a daughter,” he said suddenly; and watching the smile in her eyes, went on:

“You mustn't get wrapped up in the past at your time of life; plenty of that when you get to my age. That's a nice dress--I like the style.”

“I made it myself.”

Ah! A woman who could make herself a pretty frock had not lost her interest in life.

“Make hay while the sun shines,” he said; “and drink that up. I want to see some colour in your cheeks. We mustn't waste life; it doesn't do. There's a new Marguerite to-night; let's hope she won't be fat. And Mephisto--anything more dreadful than a fat chap playing the Devil I can't imagine.”

But they did not go to the opera after all, for in getting up from dinner the dizziness came over him again, and she insisted on his staying quiet and going to bed early. When he parted from her at the door of the hotel, having paid the cabman to drive her to Chelsea, he sat down again for a moment to enjoy the memory of her words: “You are such a darling to me, Uncle Jolyon!” Why! Who wouldn't be! He would have liked to stay up another day and take her to the Zoo, but two days running of him would bore her to death. No, he must wait till next Sunday; she had promised to come then. They would settle those lessons for Holly, if only for a month. It would be something. That little Mam'zelle Beauce wouldn't like it, but she would have to lump it. And crushing his old opera hat against his chest he sought the lift.

He drove to Waterloo next morning, struggling with a desire to say: 'rive me to Chelsea.' But his sense of proportion was too strong. Besides, he still felt shaky, and did not want to risk another aberration like that of last night, away from home. Holly, too, was expecting him, and what he had in his bag for her. Not that there was any cupboard love in his little sweet--she was a bundle of affection. Then, with the rather bitter cynicism of the old, he wondered for a second whether it was not cupboard love which made Irene put up with him. No, she was not that sort either. She had, if anything, too little notion of how to butter her bread, no sense of property, poor thing! Besides, he had not breathed a word about that codicil, nor should he--sufficient unto the day was the good thereof.

In the victoria which met him at the station Holly was restraining the dog Balthasar, and their caresses made 'jubey' his drive home. All the rest of that fine hot day and most of the next he was content and peaceful, reposing in the shade, while the long lingering sunshine showered gold on the lawns and the flowers. But on Thursday evening at his lonely dinner he began to count the hours; sixty-five till he would go down to meet her again in the little coppice, and walk up through the fields at her side. He had intended to consult the doctor about his fainting fit, but the fellow would be sure to insist on quiet, no excitement and all that; and he did not mean to be tied by the leg, did not want to be told of an infirmity--if there were one, could not afford to hear of it at his time of life, now that this new interest had come. And he carefully avoided making any mention of it in a letter to his

son. It would only bring them back with a run! How far this silence was due to consideration for their pleasure, how far to regard for his own, he did not pause to consider.

That night in his study he had just finished his cigar and was dozing off, when he heard the rustle of a gown, and was conscious of a scent of violets. Opening his eyes he saw her, dressed in grey, standing by the fireplace, holding out her arms. The odd thing was that, though those arms seemed to hold nothing, they were curved as if round someone's neck, and her own neck was bent back, her lips open, her eyes closed. She vanished at once, and there were the mantelpiece and his bronzes. But those bronzes and the mantelpiece had not been there when she was, only the fireplace and the wall! Shaken and troubled, he got up. 'I must take medicine,' he thought; 'I can't be well.' His heart beat too fast, he had an asthmatic feeling in the chest; and going to the window, he opened it to get some air. A dog was barking far away, one of the dogs at Gage's farm no doubt, beyond the coppice. A beautiful still night, but dark. 'I dropped off,' he mused, 'that's it! And yet I'll swear my eyes were open!' A sound like a sigh seemed to answer.

"What's that?" he said sharply, "who's there?"

Putting his hand to his side to still the beating of his heart, he stepped out on the terrace. Something soft scurried by in the dark. "Shoo!" It was that great grey cat. 'Young Bosinney was like a great cat!' he thought. 'It was him in there, that she--that she was--He's got her still!' He walked to the edge of the terrace, and looked down into the darkness; he could just see the powdering of the daisies on the unmown lawn. Here to-day and gone to-morrow! And there came the moon, who saw all, young and old, alive and dead, and didn't care a dump! His own turn soon. For a single day of youth he would give what was left! And he turned again towards the house. He could see the windows of the night nursery up there. His little sweet would be asleep. 'Hope that dog won't wake her!' he thought. 'What is it makes us love, and makes us die! I must go to bed.'

And across the terrace stones, growing grey in the moonlight, he passed back within.

How should an old man live his days if not in dreaming of his well-spent past? In that, at all events, there is no agitating warmth, only pale winter sunshine. The shell can withstand the gentle beating of the dynamos of memory. The present he should distrust; the future shun. From beneath thick shade he should watch the sunlight creeping at his toes. If there be sun of summer, let him not go out into it, mistaking it for the Indian-summer sun! Thus peradventure he shall decline softly, slowly, imperceptibly, until impatient Nature clutches his wind-pipe and he gasps away to death some early morning before the world is aired, and they put on his tombstone: 'In the fulness of years!' yea! If he

preserve his principles in perfect order, a Forsyte may live on long after he is dead.

Old Jolyon was conscious of all this, and yet there was in him that which transcended Forsyteism. For it is written that a Forsyte shall not love beauty more than reason; nor his own way more than his own health. And something beat within him in these days that with each throb fretted at the thinning shell. His sagacity knew this, but it knew too that he could not stop that beating, nor would if he could. And yet, if you had told him he was living on his capital, he would have stared you down. No, no; a man did not live on his capital; it was not done! The shibboleths of the past are ever more real than the actualities of the present. And he, to whom living on one's capital had always been anathema, could not have borne to have applied so gross a phrase to his own case. Pleasure is healthful; beauty good to see; to live again in the youth of the young--and what else on earth was he doing!

Methodically, as had been the way of his whole life, he now arranged his time. On Tuesdays he journeyed up to town by train; Irene came and dined with him. And they went to the opera. On Thursdays he drove to town, and, putting that fat chap and his horses up, met her in Kensington Gardens, picking up the carriage after he had left her, and driving home again in time for dinner. He threw out the casual formula that he had business in London on those two days. On Wednesdays and Saturdays she came down to give Holly music lessons. The greater the pleasure he took in her society, the more scrupulously fastidious he became, just a matter-of-fact and friendly uncle. Not even in feeling, really, was he more--for, after all, there was his age. And yet, if she were late he fidgeted himself to death. If she missed coming, which happened twice, his eyes grew sad as an old dog's, and he failed to sleep.

And so a month went by--a month of summer in the fields, and in his heart, with summer's heat and the fatigue thereof. Who could have believed a few weeks back that he would have looked forward to his son's and his grand-daughter's return with something like dread! There was such a delicious freedom, such recovery of that independence a man enjoys before he founds a family, about these weeks of lovely weather, and this new companionship with one who demanded nothing, and remained always a little unknown, retaining the fascination of mystery. It was like a draught of wine to him who has been drinking water for so long that he has almost forgotten the stir wine brings to his blood, the narcotic to his brain. The flowers were coloured brighter, scents and music and the sunlight had a living value--were no longer mere reminders of past enjoyment. There was something now to live for which stirred him continually to anticipation. He lived in that, not in retrospection; the difference is considerable to any so old as he. The pleasures of the table, never of much consequence to one naturally abstemious, had lost all value. He ate little, without knowing what he ate; and every day grew thinner and more worn to look at. He was again a 'threadpaper'. and

to this thinned form his massive forehead, with hollows at the temples, gave more dignity than ever. He was very well aware that he ought to see the doctor, but liberty was too sweet. He could not afford to pet his frequent shortness of breath and the pain in his side at the expense of liberty. Return to the vegetable existence he had led among the agricultural journals with the life-size mangold wurzels, before this new attraction came into his life--no! He exceeded his allowance of cigars. Two a day had always been his rule. Now he smoked three and sometimes four--a man will when he is filled with the creative spirit. But very often he thought: 'I must give up smoking, and coffee; I must give up rattling up to town.' But he did not; there was no one in any sort of authority to notice him, and this was a priceless boon.

The servants perhaps wondered, but they were, naturally, dumb. Mam'zelle Beauce was too concerned with her own digestion, and too 'wellbrrred' to make personal allusions. Holly had not as yet an eye for the relative appearance of him who was her plaything and her god. It was left for Irene herself to beg him to eat more, to rest in the hot part of the day, to take a tonic, and so forth. But she did not tell him that she was the cause of his thinness--for one cannot see the havoc oneself is working. A man of eighty-five has no passions, but the Beauty which produces passion works on in the old way, till death closes the eyes which crave the sight of Her.

On the first day of the second week in July he received a letter from his son in Paris to say that they would all be back on Friday. This had always been more sure than Fate; but, with the pathetic improvidence given to the old, that they may endure to the end, he had never quite admitted it. Now he did, and something would have to be done. He had ceased to be able to imagine life without this new interest, but that which is not imagined sometimes exists, as Forsytes are perpetually finding to their cost. He sat in his old leather chair, doubling up the letter, and mumbling with his lips the end of an unlighted cigar. After to-morrow his Tuesday expeditions to town would have to be abandoned. He could still drive up, perhaps, once a week, on the pretext of seeing his man of business. But even that would be dependent on his health, for now they would begin to fuss about him. The lessons! The lessons must go on! She must swallow down her scruples, and June must put her feelings in her pocket. She had done so once, on the day after the news of Bosinney's death; what she had done then, she could surely do again now. Four years since that injury was inflicted on her--not Christian to keep the memory of old sores alive. June's will was strong, but his was stronger, for his sands were running out. Irene was soft, surely she would do this for him, subdue her natural shrinking, sooner than give him pain! The lessons must continue; for if they did, he was secure. And lighting his cigar at last, he began trying to shape out how to put it to them all, and explain this strange intimacy; how to veil and wrap it away from the naked truth--that he could not bear to be deprived of the sight of beauty. Ah! Holly! Holly was fond of her, Holly liked

her lessons. She would save him--his little sweet! And with that happy thought he became serene, and wondered what he had been worrying about so fearfully. He must not worry, it left him always curiously weak, and as if but half present in his own body.

That evening after dinner he had a return of the dizziness, though he did not faint. He would not ring the bell, because he knew it would mean a fuss, and make his going up on the morrow more conspicuous. When one grew old, the whole world was in conspiracy to limit freedom, and for what reason?--just to keep the breath in him a little longer. He did not want it at such cost. Only the dog Balthasar saw his lonely recovery from that weakness; anxiously watched his master go to the sideboard and drink some brandy, instead of giving him a biscuit. When at last old Jolyon felt able to tackle the stairs he went up to bed. And, though still shaky next morning, the thought of the evening sustained and strengthened him. It was always such a pleasure to give her a good dinner--he suspected her of undereating when she was alone; and, at the opera to watch her eyes glow and brighten, the unconscious smiling of her lips. She hadn't much pleasure, and this was the last time he would be able to give her that treat. But when he was packing his bag he caught himself wishing that he had not the fatigue of dressing for dinner before him, and the exertion, too, of telling her about June's return.

The opera that evening was 'Carmen,' and he chose the last entr'acte to break the news, instinctively putting it off till the latest moment.

She took it quietly, queerly; in fact, he did not know how she had taken it before the wayward music lifted up again and silence became necessary. The mask was down over her face, that mask behind which so much went on that he could not see. She wanted time to think it over, no doubt! He would not press her, for she would be coming to give her lesson to-morrow afternoon, and he should see her then when she had got used to the idea. In the cab he talked only of the Carmen; he had seen better in the old days, but this one was not bad at all. When he took her hand to say good-night, she bent quickly forward and kissed his forehead.

“Good-bye, dear Uncle Jolyon, you have been so sweet to me.”

“To-morrow then,” he said. “Good-night. Sleep well.” She echoed softly: “Sleep well” and from the cab window, already moving away, he saw her face screwed round towards him, and her hand put out in a gesture which seemed to linger.

He sought his room slowly. They never gave him the same, and he could not get used to these 'spick-and-span' bedrooms with new furniture and grey-green carpets sprinkled all over with pink roses. He was wakeful and that wretched Habanera kept throbbing in his head.

His French had never been equal to its words, but its sense he knew, if it had any sense, a gipsy thing--wild and unaccountable. Well, there was in life something which upset all your care and plans--something which made men and women dance to its pipes. And he lay staring from deep-sunk eyes into the darkness where the unaccountable held sway. You thought you had hold of life, but it slipped away behind you, took you by the scruff of the neck, forced you here and forced you there, and then, likely as not, squeezed life out of you! It took the very stars like that, he shouldn't wonder, rubbed their noses together and flung them apart; it had never done playing its pranks. Five million people in this great blunderbuss of a town, and all of them at the mercy of that Life-Force, like a lot of little dried peas hopping about on a board when you struck your fist on it. Ah, well! Himself would not hop much longer--a good long sleep would do him good!

How hot it was up here!--how noisy! His forehead burned; she had kissed it just where he always worried; just there--as if she had known the very place and wanted to kiss it all away for him. But, instead, her lips left a patch of grievous uneasiness. She had never spoken in quite that voice, had never before made that lingering gesture or looked back at him as she drove away.

He got out of bed and pulled the curtains aside; his room faced down over the river. There was little air, but the sight of that breadth of water flowing by, calm, eternal, soothed him. 'The great thing,' he thought 'is not to make myself a nuisance. I'll think of my little sweet, and go to sleep.' But it was long before the heat and throbbing of the London night died out into the short slumber of the summer morning. And old Jolyon had but forty winks.

When he reached home next day he went out to the flower garden, and with the help of Holly, who was very delicate with flowers, gathered a great bunch of carnations. They were, he told her, for 'the lady in grey'--a name still bandied between them; and he put them in a bowl in his study where he meant to tackle Irene the moment she came, on the subject of June and future lessons. Their fragrance and colour would help. After lunch he lay down, for he felt very tired, and the carriage would not bring her from the station till four o'clock. But as the hour approached he grew restless, and sought the schoolroom, which overlooked the drive. The sun-blinds were down, and Holly was there with Mademoiselle Beauce, sheltered from the heat of a stifling July day, attending to their silkworms. Old Jolyon had a natural antipathy to these methodical creatures, whose heads and colour reminded him of elephants; who nibbled such quantities of holes in nice green leaves; and smelled, as he thought, horrid. He sat down on a chintz-covered windowseat whence he could see the drive, and get what air there was; and the dog Balthasar who appreciated chintz on hot days, jumped up beside him. Over the cottage piano a violet dust-sheet, faded almost to grey, was spread, and

on it the first lavender, whose scent filled the room. In spite of the coolness here, perhaps because of that coolness the beat of life vehemently impressed his ebbled-down senses. Each sunbeam which came through the chinks had annoying brilliance; that dog smelled very strong; the lavender perfume was overpowering; those silkworms heaving up their grey-green backs seemed horribly alive; and Holly's dark head bent over them had a wonderfully silky sheen. A marvellous cruelly strong thing was life when you were old and weak; it seemed to mock you with its multitude of forms and its beating vitality. He had never, till those last few weeks, had this curious feeling of being with one half of him eagerly borne along in the stream of life, and with the other half left on the bank, watching that helpless progress. Only when Irene was with him did he lose this double consciousness.

Holly turned her head, pointed with her little brown fist to the piano--for to point with a finger was not 'well-brrred'--and said slyly:

“Look at the 'lady in grey,' Gran; isn't she pretty to-day?”

Old Jolyon's heart gave a flutter, and for a second the room was clouded; then it cleared, and he said with a twinkle:

“Who's been dressing her up?”

“Mam'zelle.”

“Holleee! Don't be foolish!”

That prim little Frenchwoman! She hadn't yet got over the music lessons being taken away from her. That wouldn't help. His little sweet was the only friend they had. Well, they were her lessons. And he shouldn't budge shouldn't budge for anything. He stroked the warm wool on Balthasar's head, and heard Holly say: “When mother's home, there won't be any changes, will there? She doesn't like strangers, you know.”

The child's words seemed to bring the chilly atmosphere of opposition about old Jolyon, and disclose all the menace to his new-found freedom. Ah! He would have to resign himself to being an old man at the mercy of care and love, or fight to keep this new and prized companionship; and to fight tired him to death. But his thin, worn face hardened into resolution till it appeared all Jaw. This was his house, and his affair; he should not budge! He looked at his watch, old and thin like himself; he had owned it fifty years. Past four already! And kissing the top of Holly's head in passing, he went down to the hall. He wanted to get hold of her before she went up to give her lesson. At the first sound of wheels he stepped out into the porch, and saw at once that the victoria was empty.

“The train's in, sir; but the lady 'asn't come.”

Old Jolyon gave him a sharp upward look, his eyes seemed to push away that fat chap's curiosity, and defy him to see the bitter disappointment he was feeling.

“Very well,” he said, and turned back into the house. He went to his study and sat down, quivering like a leaf. What did this mean? She might have lost her train, but he knew well enough she hadn't. 'Good-bye, dear Uncle Jolyon.' Why 'Good-bye' and not 'Good-night'. And that hand of hers lingering in the air. And her kiss. What did it mean? Vehement alarm and irritation took possession of him. He got up and began to pace the Turkey carpet, between window and wall. She was going to give him up! He felt it for certain--and he defenceless. An old man wanting to look on beauty! It was ridiculous! Age closed his mouth, paralysed his power to fight. He had no right to what was warm and living, no right to anything but memories and sorrow. He could not plead with her; even an old man has his dignity. Defenceless! For an hour, lost to bodily fatigue, he paced up and down, past the bowl of carnations he had plucked, which mocked him with its scent. Of all things hard to bear, the prostration of will-power is hardest, for one who has always had his way. Nature had got him in its net, and like an unhappy fish he turned and swam at the meshes, here and there, found no hole, no breaking point. They brought him tea at five o'clock, and a letter. For a moment hope beat up in him. He cut the envelope with the butter knife, and read:

“DEAREST UNCLE JOLYON,--I can't bear to write anything that may disappoint you, but I was too cowardly to tell you last night. I feel I can't come down and give Holly any more lessons, now that June is coming back. Some things go too deep to be forgotten. It has been such a joy to see you and Holly. Perhaps I shall still see you sometimes when you come up, though I'm sure it's not good for you; I can see you are tiring yourself too much. I believe you ought to rest quite quietly all this hot weather, and now you have your son and June coming back you will be so happy. Thank you a million times for all your sweetness to me.

“Lovingly your IRENE.”

So, there it was! Not good for him to have pleasure and what he chiefly cared about; to try and put off feeling the inevitable end of all things, the approach of death with its stealthy, rustling footsteps. Not good for him! Not even she could see how she was his new lease of interest in life, the incarnation of all the beauty he felt slipping from him.

His tea grew cold, his cigar remained unlit; and up and down he paced, torn between his dignity and his hold on life. Intolerable to be squeezed out slowly, without a say of your own, to live on when your will was in the hands of others bent on weighing you to the ground with

care and love. Intolerable! He would see what telling her the truth would do--the truth that he wanted the sight of her more than just a lingering on. He sat down at his old bureau and took a pen. But he could not write. There was something revolting in having to plead like this; plead that she should warm his eyes with her beauty. It was tantamount to confessing dotage. He simply could not. And instead, he wrote:

"I had hoped that the memory of old sores would not be allowed to stand in the way of what is a pleasure and a profit to me and my little grand-daughter. But old men learn to forego their whims; they are obliged to, even the whim to live must be foregone sooner or later; and perhaps the sooner the better.

"My love to you,

"JOLYON FORSYTE."

'itter,' he thought, 'but I can't help it. I'm tired.' He sealed and dropped it into the box for the evening post, and hearing it fall to the bottom, thought: 'There goes all I've looked forward to!'

That evening after dinner which he scarcely touched, after his cigar which he left half-smoked for it made him feel faint, he went very slowly upstairs and stole into the night-nursery. He sat down on the window-seat. A night-light was burning, and he could just see Holly's face, with one hand underneath the cheek. An early cockchafer buzzed in the Japanese paper with which they had filled the grate, and one of the horses in the stable stamped restlessly. To sleep like that child! He pressed apart two rungs of the venetian blind and looked out. The moon was rising, blood-red. He had never seen so red a moon. The woods and fields out there were dropping to sleep too, in the last glimmer of the summer light. And beauty, like a spirit, walked. 'I've had a long life,' he thought, 'the best of nearly everything. I'm an ungrateful chap; I've seen a lot of beauty in my time. Poor young Bosinney said I had a sense of beauty. There's a man in the moon to-night!' A moth went by, another, another. 'Ladies in grey!' He closed his eyes. A feeling that he would never open them again beset him; he let it grow, let himself sink; then, with a shiver, dragged the lids up. There was something wrong with him, no doubt, deeply wrong; he would have to have the doctor after all. It didn't much matter now! Into that coppice the moon-light would have crept; there would be shadows, and those shadows would be the only things awake. No birds, beasts, flowers, insects; Just the shadows--moving; 'Ladies in grey!' Over that log they would climb; would whisper together. She and Bosinney! Funny thought! And the frogs and little things would whisper too! How the clock ticked, in here! It was all eerie--out there in the light of that red moon; in here with the little steady night-light and, the ticking clock and the nurse's

dressings-gown hanging from the edge of the screen, tall, like a woman's figure. 'Lady in grey!' And a very odd thought beset him: Did she exist? Had she ever come at all? Or was she but the emanation of all the beauty he had loved and must leave so soon? The violet-grey spirit with the dark eyes and the crown of amber hair, who walks the dawn and the moonlight, and at blue-bell time? What was she, who was she, did she exist? He rose and stood a moment clutching the window-sill, to give him a sense of reality again; then began tiptoeing towards the door. He stopped at the foot of the bed; and Holly, as if conscious of his eyes fixed on her, stirred, sighed, and curled up closer in defence. He tiptoed on and passed out into the dark passage; reached his room, undressed at once, and stood before a mirror in his night-shirt. What a scarecrow--with temples fallen in, and thin legs! His eyes resisted his own image, and a look of pride came on his face. All was in league to pull him down, even his reflection in the glass, but he was not down--yet! He got into bed, and lay a long time without sleeping, trying to reach resignation, only too well aware that fretting and disappointment were very bad for him.

He woke in the morning so unrefreshed and strengthless that he sent for the doctor. After sounding him, the fellow pulled a face as long as your arm, and ordered him to stay in bed and give up smoking. That was no hardship; there was nothing to get up for, and when he felt ill, tobacco always lost its savour. He spent the morning languidly with the sun-blinds down, turning and re-turning *The Times*, not reading much, the dog Balthasar lying beside his bed. With his lunch they brought him a telegram, running thus:

'our letter received coming down this afternoon will be with you at four-thirty. Irene.'

Coming down! After all! Then she did exist--and he was not deserted. Coming down! A glow ran through his limbs; his cheeks and forehead felt hot. He drank his soup, and pushed the tray-table away, lying very quiet until they had removed lunch and left him alone; but every now and then his eyes twinkled. Coming down! His heart beat fast, and then did not seem to beat at all. At three o'clock he got up and dressed deliberately, noiselessly. Holly and Mam'zelle would be in the schoolroom, and the servants asleep after their dinner, he shouldn't wonder. He opened his door cautiously, and went downstairs. In the hall the dog Balthasar lay solitary, and, followed by him, old Jolyon passed into his study and out into the burning afternoon. He meant to go down and meet her in the coppice, but felt at once he could not manage that in this heat. He sat down instead under the oak tree by the swing, and the dog Balthasar, who also felt the heat, lay down beside him. He sat there smiling. What a revel of bright minutes! What a hum of insects, and cooing of pigeons! It was the quintessence of a summer day. Lovely! And he was happy--happy as a sand-boy, whatever that might be. She was coming; she had not given him up! He had everything in life he

wanted--except a little more breath, and less weight--just here! He would see her when she emerged from the fernery, come swaying just a little, a violet-grey figure passing over the daisies and dandelions and 'soldiers' on the lawn--the soldiers with their flowery crowns. He would not move, but she would come up to him and say: 'Dear Uncle Jolyon, I am sorry!' and sit in the swing and let him look at her and tell her that he had not been very well but was all right now; and that dog would lick her hand. That dog knew his master was fond of her; that dog was a good dog.

It was quite shady under the tree; the sun could not get at him, only make the rest of the world bright so that he could see the Grand Stand at Epsom away out there, very far, and the cows cropping the clover in the field and swishing at the flies with their tails. He smelled the scent of limes, and lavender. Ah! that was why there was such a racket of bees. They were excited--busy, as his heart was busy and excited. Drowsy, too, drowsy and drugged on honey and happiness; as his heart was drugged and drowsy. Summer--summer--they seemed saying; great bees and little bees, and the flies too!

The stable clock struck four; in half an hour she would be here. He would have just one tiny nap, because he had had so little sleep of late; and then he would be fresh for her, fresh for youth and beauty, coming towards him across the sunlit lawn--lady in grey! And settling back in his chair he closed his eyes. Some thistle-down came on what little air there was, and pitched on his moustache more white than itself. He did not know; but his breathing stirred it, caught there. A ray of sunlight struck through and lodged on his boot. A bumble-bee alighted and strolled on the crown of his Panama hat. And the delicious surge of slumber reached the brain beneath that hat, and the head swayed forward and rested on his breast. Summer--summer! So went the hum.

The stable clock struck the quarter past. The dog Balthasar stretched and looked up at his master. The thistledown no longer moved. The dog placed his chin over the sunlit foot. It did not stir. The dog withdrew his chin quickly, rose, and leaped on old Jolyon's lap, looked in his face, whined; then, leaping down, sat on his haunches, gazing up. And suddenly he uttered a long, long howl.

But the thistledown was still as death, and the face of his old master.

Summer--summer--summer! The soundless footsteps on the grass!



LOYAL, EVEN UNTO DEATH

Or The Sugawara Tragedy

The Project Gutenberg eBook, *Romances of Old Japan*, by Yei Theodora Ozaki

NOTE.--For many centuries the Fujiwara nobles (the Empresses were always chosen from this family) had secured for themselves supreme control and influence over the Mikados in Kyoto. In the ninth century another family of courtiers came into prominence, namely the Sugawara, who eventually gained sufficient power with the Emperor to be a serious menace to the schemes of the Fujiwara. At the end of the ninth century there arose one especially, Lord Michizane Sugawara, brilliant statesman, scholar, high-souled patriot and poet.

The Emperor Uda held him in high esteem and promoted him from the position of his tutor to that of Minister of the Right.[1] In 898 the Fujiwara succeeded in compelling Uda to abdicate in favour of his son, a child of twelve years of age, expecting him to be a more pliant tool in their hands. This boy became the 60th Emperor, Daigo, who, by the advice of his Imperial father, planned to give Michizane absolute authority in state affairs. The jealousy of the vigilant Fujiwara courtiers was fully aroused, and through the machinations of Lord Tokihira (Fujiwara), Minister of the Left, his rival, Michizane, was falsely accused of high treason and banished to Kiushiu where, in the horrors of poverty and exile, he died in 903. Michizane is now known by the posthumous title of Tenjin. Many Shinto temples have been erected in his honour, and students still worship his spirit as the patron god of letters and literature.

The following drama, one of the most popular in Japanese literature, tells the story of one heroic incident in the scattering of the Sugawara family, and of the rescue of Lady Sugawara, and the loyalty of Matsuo and O Chiyo, his wife, vassals of the Sugawara.

Matsuo, the better to serve his lord's cause, feigns to be unfaithful to him and to go over to the enemy--in fact, he acts the dangerous part of a spy. The Fujiwara Minister is completely deceived and, enlisting his aid, reveals to Matsuo his secret plans for the final overthrow of the exiled Sugawara and the murder of his son. So clever and thorough is Matsuo's dissimulation that even his own father and his brothers are deluded, and Matsuo is calumniated by all who know him, accused of disloyalty to his lord (an unpardonable offence in old Japan) and

disinherited by his family. Finally, in a crowning act of transcendent devotion to the Sugawara House, Matsuo and O Chiyo, to save their young lord from death, willingly substitute their own child, Kotaro, in his place. In the feudal days loyalty was the one great social obligation of the _samurai_ to his lord. And this spirit of loyalty often involved painful self-sacrifice. "Life was freely offered, not only by him who was bound by fealty to his lord, but by his children."

The following is a typical tragedy of its kind.

PERSONS REPRESENTED

LADY SUGAWARA, wife of the exiled Prime Minister or "Minister of the Right"--hiding from the enemy in Matsuo's house.

MATSUO, a devoted vassal of Lord Michizane Sugawara.

O CHIYO, wife of Matsuo.

KOTARO, the little son of Matsuo and O Chiyo.

SHUNDO GEMBA, the emissary of Lord Fujiwara Tokihira, triumphant enemy of Sugawara.

TAKEBE GENZO, a schoolmaster in the suburbs of Kyoto, also vassal of the Sugawara.

TONAMI, wife of the schoolmaster.

KANSHUSAI, Lord Sugawara's son, a handsome clever boy, eight years of age.

Several village school children and their parents.

SCENE I. Matsuo's cottage in Kyoto. Night.

Lanterns lighted in the room.

LOYAL EVEN UNTO DEATH

Or The Sugawara Tragedy

In the old capital of Kyoto, not far from the Imperial Palace, there

lived a samurai named Matsuo with his wife O Chiyo, and their little son Kotaro, eight years of age.

With Kotaro by her side, O Chiyo reverently on her knees pushed aside the sliding screens of an inner room, and disclosed the Lady Sugawara seated on the mats, bending forward with her face buried in her hands, her whole attitude expressive of grief and despair.

O Chiyo bowed low and said with a voice hushed in sympathy:

"It is terrible to me to think that such a great lady as you cannot go even to the veranda in the daytime for fear of being seen by your enemies. You must, indeed, feel like a prisoner--and above all, the separation from the Prime Minister, and your son and daughter. How despondent you must feel! While you were hiding in the capital the secret of your whereabouts leaked out, and you were in danger of being caught--at that crisis my husband saved you and brought you here. You must be sadly ill at ease confined in this poor house, and after what you have been accustomed to the loneliness must be very depressing. But do not despair! You may yet join your husband and son sooner than you think. Till that time comes patiently endure all hardships, hoping for happier days."

"Oh!" answered the Lady Sugawara in melancholy tones, "you are so sympathetic and good, I shall never forget your kindness, even after death. Through the malice of a bad man[2] my husband was banished to a distant place, and my poor boy and myself are refugees. The thought of them haunts me from morning till night. There is nothing but misery in dragging out my existence from day to day in this state--but I will, at least, wait till I can see them again, if but for a moment, and then die, especially as your little Kotaro reminds me vividly of my own son, to whom he bears a great resemblance. My longing to see him again grows ever more and more intense."

With these sad words the unfortunate lady burst into tears; O Chiyo, deeply affected by her sorrowful plight, wept with her, and the silence of the room was only broken by the sobs of the two women.

Suddenly, some one from outside announced in a loud voice that an emissary from an exalted personage had arrived.

Both women started to their feet. O Chiyo barely had time to conceal Lady Sugawara in an inner room, when, preceded by several attendants carrying lanterns, the emissary, Shundo Gemba, arrived in full state as befitting the bearer of an important message--he pompously entered the room and seated himself in the place of honour before the alcove.

O Chiyo's husband, Matsuo, who had secluded himself and was resting in an inner room, overhearing the commotion, came out to welcome the

visitor.

"As I am suffering from illness I must beg you to overlook my lack of ceremony in not receiving you in official dress," and he bowed to the ground in a respectful manner.

Gemba replied haughtily:

"However ill you may be you must listen to the command of Lord Tokihira (the new Prime Minister who had supplanted Sugawara). Sugawara's son, whose hiding-place was hitherto unknown, has at last been discovered by some one who has revealed the secret. The boy is now in the house of Takebe Genzo, by profession a teacher of Chinese writing, but in reality a secret and staunch supporter of Michizane. This man passes the young lord off as his own son. There is no one on our side who knows Kanshusai except yourself, so you are commanded to identify the head as soon as it is cut off, and to bring it as a trophy to Lord Tokihira. By way of reward for this service sick leave will be granted you, and on your recovery you will be created Lord of Harima. There is no time to be lost, so you must make preparations at once."

O Chiyo, who was listening with a beating heart in the next room, felt keenly apprehensive, for her husband had been extra moody and reticent of late, and she could neither fathom what was in his mind, nor what answer he would make to the dreadful proposition of this man straight from the enemy's camp.

To her utter consternation Matsuo replied:

"What kindness on the part of our lord! No greater honour could be conferred upon our house. I will obey the command at once. But owing to my illness matters cannot be arranged as speedily as I could wish. If that man Genzo should happen to hear that I am going to attack him and wrest his prize from him, he may escape with the young Sugawara."

"Do not trouble yourself about that," returned Gemba, "it is only a _ronin's_[3] hut, and need not even be surrounded."

"But Takebe, knowing that Lord Tokihira is instituting a search for the boy, still boldly harbours him--it is certain that the schoolmaster can be no common man--we must be very cautious in dealing with him," objected Matsuo.

"You are quite right," replied the envoy, "if they should manage to escape both of us will be blamed."

"Yes, indeed," Matsuo agreed; and then as if suddenly struck by the thought, "I am sorry to trouble you, but do not fail to let your men keep a sharp watch on every exit of the village during the night."

"All right," responded the other, "you need not trouble on that score, every necessary precaution will be taken."

"Well, then at an early hour to-morrow I will accompany you to Takebe's house," said Matsuo.

"Thank you for your trouble," and the two men took leave of each other, Gemba departing from the house in the same haughty style as he had entered it.

Matsuo, with a troubled heart, watched until the emissary's procession had disappeared in the distance. Before he could carry out his intended plan he must first sound his wife.

During the interview O Chiyo had waited in the next room, a silent witness of all that had taken place between her husband and Lord Tokihira's messenger. As soon as Gemba's party had taken their departure she opened the sliding screens and with some trepidation confronted her husband.

"It seems," said the wife, "by what Gemba had to communicate, that the hiding-place of our young lord is at last discovered. Before the assassin has had time to carry out his murderous work let us send for him here, and try to rescue the poor child before he falls into the hands of the enemy. There is no time to lose."

As Matsuo made no response, O Chiyo pressed him again and again not to delay.

At last he laughed cynically.

"You do not seem to have the slightest idea of what is in my mind! I brought Lady Sugawara here from Kita's house so that I might deliver her up together with her son's head at the same time--that is why I have hidden her here."

"What are you saying?" gasped O Chiyo. "Can it be your real intention to betray them to Tokihira?"

"Yes," answered her husband, calmly looking her in the face, "now is the time to grasp my long-wished for ambition--my fortune has come at last," and he smiled as if well pleased with himself.

This was the first time that Matsuo had given any hint of his sinister intention towards the innocent Lady Sugawara and her son, and O Chiyo was so startled and horrified that for a few moments she was choked for utterance. She had hitherto felt convinced that he was devoted, heart, soul, and body, to the cause of their beloved ex-Prime Minister. Bitter

tears fell from her eyes, and she moved nearer to him on the mats; in the earnestness of her appeal she stretched out a hand and laid it on his arm, till she could find words to falter out:

"Oh, my husband, since when has this dreadful scheme taken possession of your heart? For the Sugawara family I have been quite resigned to your being misunderstood and disinherited by your father's house, and the severance of all relationship with your brothers--indeed, so staunch and whole-hearted has been your devotion to this cause that I always intended to apologize and explain matters to your family when the time came. Now suddenly, without the least warning, your lifelong fidelity has been perverted into treachery. However great your ambition for promotion may be, to betray the wife and child of our Lord Sugawara into the hands of Tokihira is impossible. Are you a devil or a dragon? The punishment for such baseness will fall not only on yourself, but on your child. Oh! purify your heart from this evil intention, and conduct the Lady Sugawara and her son safely to the ex-Prime Minister in Tsukushi,[4] I implore you!" and the distraught woman lifted her hands in an attitude of prayer to her husband, while the tears coursed down her cheeks.

But, unmoved by her appeal, Matsuo still laughed contemptuously.

"What silly woman's talk! I have now no parents or brothers--they are strangers to me! It would be foolish to forget our own child's welfare for the sake of exiles banished by the State. You may say it is against reason and righteousness, but I do it for the sake of my boy--there is no treasure more precious than a son."

"Oh! oh!" sobbed O Chiyo, "how heartless you are! If you think so much of your own boy, Lady Sugawara's feelings must be the same for her son. To attain your ambition at the expense of others, sorrow can bring you no good. Your life will end in sorrow and misery as the result of such a deed."

Matsuo became more incensed, and sternly bade his wife be silent.

"If the Lady Sugawara overhear you and escape, everything will be lost, you foolish woman!" and with these words Matsuo turned to leave the room. His wife seized the edge of his robe and tried to hold him back.

"Do not hinder me, whatever you do!" he said, angrily, and pushing her aside, he disappeared in the direction of Lady Sugawara's room.

O Chiyo fell as her husband tore himself from her detaining grasp, and lay prostrate on the mats, stunned with the horror of what he was about to do. After a few minutes she collected herself.

"Oh, oh! it seems like some dreadful dream," she murmured in acute

distress. "I have lived happily with Matsuo for so many years, and surely he cannot be such a bad man. For the sake of our boy he has lost his conscience. Poor lady! Poor lady! In total ignorance of his change of heart she has trusted to him as her chief staff and pillar of support. How can I look her in the face after this? To prove to her that I am not one with my husband it is better to kill myself and ask her pardon in another world."

The poor woman, in her grief and perplexity, wept and trembled by turns. After a few minutes she wiped away her tears and sat up with determination written on her face.

"It is now impossible to change my husband's cruel purpose," she said to herself aloud. "My innocent little Kotaro will be taught wrong ways, he will grow up a degraded man and come to a bad end. I foresee it all quite plainly. It is far better to kill him now and let his pure soul accompany me on my long journey to the next life. Besides, when Kotaro is no longer alive, Matsuo may return to his better nature and repent of his treacherous schemes, and the knowledge of it will reach me and I shall be glad, even after death."

At this moment her little son came gaily running to her. Knowing nothing of the tragic web of death, which Fate, like a grim spider, was weaving round him, he playfully caressed his mother, his bright eyes shining, his little face alight with smiles.

"Mother, Mother, the lady inside is calling you! Come, quick, quick!"

As O Chiyo looked at the child's innocent face the tears rose to her eyes.

"Oh! Kotaro, my little son, come here--here," she said with a sob, and drew him close to her side. "Oh! Kotaro, listen attentively to what I am going to say, like a good boy. The lady in the inner room is the wife of your father's and your mother's lord, and yours also, Kotaro. For many years we have received nothing but favours and kindness from them, therefore we owe them both a debt of great gratitude. Now, Kotaro, your father tells me that he intends to kill that good unfortunate lady, our own lord's wife--therefore, I, your mother, cannot remain alive any longer--I have decided that my spirit shall accompany her as an attendant to the other world. But you, Kotaro, are the favourite of your father--perhaps you would like to remain behind in this world with him?"

"Oh, no, no," answered the child, "I won't stay with such a cruel father. If you die, I want to die with you!"

"Oh, how sensible you are, Kotaro. Even if you had refused to die, I must have killed you for the sake of your father--you seem to

understand that without being told. I have, therefore, the more pity for you as you are so intelligent and your wish is to die with me. When your father sees you lying dead, sorrow may make him repent of the evil path he has chosen. The other day I made a consecrated banner for the grave of little Sakura Maru, your uncle. How little did I dream, while making it, that I should ever use it for my own son."

With these words she drew out a dagger which had been concealed in her _obi_,^[5] unsheathed it, and with raised hand was about to stab the child.

"Stay, stay, do not be too hasty!" the voice of Matsuo rang out sharply in the silence, as he suddenly appeared in the open _shoji_^[6] leading Lady Sugawara by the hand. As they entered the room in front of the startled O Chiyo, whose hand, poised to strike the fatal blow, fell to her side, Matsuo made a gesture to Lady Sugawara to take the place of honour by the alcove.

Matsuo then seated himself opposite Sugawara's unhappy wife in the lowly seat near the exit of the room, prostrating himself before her.

"It is quite natural that your ladyship and my wife do not know my true heart: now let me speak the truth," he said, with quiet and impressive dignity. "After the overthrow of your house and the banishment of Lord Sugawara, when my brother became _ronin_ and quarrelled with me, I served Prince Tokihira for some time. I was soon disgusted with his ways, and finding my situation untenable, asked for sick leave, with the purpose of finding your son so that I might do my best to restore your house to its former position. I did everything in my power to help you, but to my dismay nearly everyone was in league with the enemy. It was part of my plan, you must know, to throw our crafty enemy off the scent, and it was to this end that I entered his service and pretended to be one of his party. I played my part so well as to deceive my own father, who, despising me for a disloyal and faithless man, condemned my conduct and disinherited me, for he, too, was devoted to your cause. For this policy also I separated from my brothers. In thus misleading the enemy I felt sure that I could be of some use in saving you and your son at a critical moment. It was a drastic step to take, but Tokihira has been completely misled, and events have turned out just as I expected. This night, as you must have heard, I received strict orders to act as identifier of your son's head. As Takebe is a faithful man he will not kill our young lord, of that rest assured. But alas! he is one, while the enemy are many. 'If anything should happen to our lord's son, it can never be undone,' these were the thoughts that troubled me this evening when I overheard what your ladyship said, that Kotaro bore a strong resemblance to our young lord; and the idea flashed into my brain that our boy can be used as a substitute to save him. At the same time it occurred to me, that if my wife's love for Kotaro obstruct my plans I should be powerless,

so to prove what was in her heart I said cruel things that I did not mean--that, for the sake of my boy, I would betray you and your son. She did not understand me, and then and there decided to kill herself and Kotaro, and by thus removing the cause of my supposed temptation to induce my repentance. What a noble wife!"

O Chiyo, as she listened to this long explanation from her beloved husband, wept for joy, and Lady Sugawara was overcome with emotion at the surpassing loyalty of her retainers; they seemed to her to be exalted above ordinary human beings--and were as Gods in the pure sphere of a selfless world.

"For sake of loyalty you have become an outcast to your father's house, and now you would kill your son, your only son, for us--it distresses me too much--it is overwhelming. I cannot accept such a sacrifice! The punishment of Heaven may be visited upon me. No, no, no--you must not slay your little Kotaro even for your lord's sake. If everything should fail us, you must try to save both, my son and Kotaro," implored the hopeless wife of the exiled minister.

Matsuo, whose mind never wavered, prostrated himself before her.

"How grateful I am to you for your considerate thought for us, but as every exit in the village is carefully watched, there is no way of escape."

Then he turned to his wife.

"After your decision of an hour ago, I do not think you will now hesitate to sacrifice our boy."

He then leaned forward and looked at his son with a smile.

"Kotaro, you are too young to understand these things, but for the sake of your young lord and your parents, die without regret!"

As Matsuo spoke those tragic words, fixing his eyes upon the upturned face of his boy, whose bright eyes looked back at him trustingly and fearlessly, a shudder involuntarily passed through his frame in spite of the iron restraint he put upon himself. But loyalty demanded the sacrifice, and at all costs the house of Sugawara must be saved. To control himself he closed his eyes, to shut out the vision of his boy's smile. The moment of weakness passed, and Matsuo once more sat erect, gazing at his son with an unmoved face, white and set as a mask.

Lady Sugawara and O Chiyo dared not look at him. Both began to sob, covering their faces with their sleeves.

"Do not give way to weakness," at last Matsuo forced himself to say,

sternly. "If we spend our time thus, everything will be lost. Look, the dawn is beginning to break. Get ready to take Kotaro to Takebe's house immediately. Quick, quick!"

"Yes, yes," assented the mother, with a sinking heart, and she slowly rose to her feet, taking Kotaro by the hand. She knew that this was the end. Her boy's doom was at hand and his hours were numbered.

"Have I to go now?" said Kotaro, bravely. "Father, will you not say farewell and call me your good boy for the last time?"

Thus the mother and her son set out for the sacrifice.

PART II

SCENE: A village school kept by Takebe Genzo and his wife Tonami, both devoted vassals of the exiled Prime Minister, Michizane Sugawara. Among Takebe's pupils is the young Sugawara. This boy they disguise and pass off as their own child. The little lord, though only eight years of age, excels in everything among the pupils and, inheriting the ability from his father, writes Chinese hieroglyphics with great skill. The senior pupil is a lazy, stupid, and incorrigibly mischievous fellow, fifteen years of age, who will not study at all.

"While our teacher is out it is a great waste of time to practise writing. Look! I have done all my writing on my head." and the lazy boy came forward and showed his school-fellows a shaved pate all blackened with Indian ink.

The little Sugawara looked at him and said:

"If you learn one new character every day you will acquire three hundred and sixty-five characters in a year. Instead of wasting your time playing like that, you must study."

But the older boy only laughed at him, and left his desk to prance about the room.

The other boys took the part of little Sugawara and, growing disgusted with the idle boy, wanted to punish him. There arose a great clamour in the school-room, all the boys shouting together and leaving their places to attack him.

Disturbed by the noise, the schoolmaster's wife came out from the inner room.

"What is the matter? Are you quarrelling again? To-day the master is away. He has been invited by a friend, and I do not know when he will come back. As we are expecting a new pupil to-day I am anxious for his return. Now, if you are good boys and will work hard this morning, I will give all of you a half-holiday this afternoon."

The boys were delighted with this promise. All promptly returned to their seats, and opening their books and their inkstands, became diligently absorbed in their tasks of reading and writing.

Just then a sound at the porch made Tonami draw aside the screens. A gentle and aristocratic-looking woman was standing there with a pretty boy of about eight years of age by her side. A manservant, carrying a desk, was in attendance.

After an exchange of civilities, the visitor explained:

"Our home is at the other end of the village. The reason for my visit is to ask you to take this naughty boy into your care, as arranged the other day. I am told that you have a child of your own about his age. I should like to see him!"

Tonami beckoned to the little Sugawara.

"Why, certainly; this is our son and heir!"

"Oh, what a nice little fellow! And how clever he looks!" Then looking round the school-room, she added:

"How busy you must be with such a number of scholars in your care. They must be a great trouble and responsibility."

"Yes, you may imagine it is no easy work to look after them all. Is this the boy you wish us to take charge of? What is his name?"

"His name is Kotaro!" answered the mother.

"What an intelligent-looking child!" exclaimed Tonami.

"Unfortunately my husband has been obliged to keep an appointment with some friends. But if you are in a hurry and cannot wait, I will go and fetch him."

"No, no," protested Matsuo's wife, "as I have an errand elsewhere I will call in on my way back. He may have returned by then."

Then calling her servant, she ordered him to bring in the presents she had brought, one for the master, and some cakes to distribute amongst the schoolboys. In a few graceful words the gratified hostess acknowledged her visitor's kind thought.

"Oh, it is nothing--only a little token of thanks from my heart for all the trouble my boy is going to give you." Then turning to Kotaro, she added:

"I am going to the next village, so you must wait for me here like a good child--don't forget all I have told you!"

"Oh, mother, I want to come with you!" Kotaro suddenly cried, catching her by the sleeve as she was stepping into the porch.

"Now, do not be naughty!" remonstrated his mother, "a big boy like you ought not to run after your mother. Look, Tonami San, what a baby he is still!"

"Oh, it is quite natural, poor little fellow. Look here, Kotaro! Come with me and I will give you something nice." Then, turning to O Chiyo, she added "Try to come back as soon as possible."

"Yes, yes, I will come back at once, if you are a good boy, Kotaro."

Seizing the opportunity she slipped out through the porch gate, followed by her servant, who closed it after her, and the two briskly clattered away on their clogs. The poor mother yearned to turn back once more, for she knew that she would never see her little son again in this world; but she kept bravely on her way.

While Tonami was trying to console Kotaro, and to distract his attention by introducing him to the little Sugawara, her husband returned. His face was pale, and he was evidently profoundly agitated. As he entered the school-room he sharply scrutinized each of the boys in turn. His wife saw at a glance that something unusual must have occurred.

"Oh, what common fellows they are!" he muttered, crossly. "Such country-bred louts can never serve my purpose, however great the trouble I take with their education," and he gloomily regarded them with knitted brows, as though something was weighing heavily on his mind.

His wife approached him and anxiously inquired: "What is the matter? You seem unusually worried to-day. You knew from the first that those village lads can never become intellectual. People will not think well of you, if you speak against your own scholars in this way. Besides, we have another pupil to-day. Please try to recover your good temper and

look at the new boy." With these words she brought forward Kotaro, but Takebe had become absorbed in his own preoccupation, and took no notice of the child.

Kotaro came forward, bowed respectfully, and said: "Please, sir, I look to you to teach me from now."

At these words, spoken in a clear, sweet treble, Takebe started from his reverie and fixed his eyes upon the new-comer; by degrees his face gradually brightened as though struck by a new train of thought.

"What a handsome and dignified boy. You might easily pass for the son of a nobleman or any other exalted personage. Well, you are a fine fellow!"

"He is, indeed," responded Tonami, with a smile. "I thought you would be glad to see such a promising pupil."

"Yes, yes," assented the master--"nothing could be better," he muttered, in an undertone, as if speaking to himself; and then aloud, "where is the mother who brought him here?"

"As you were not at home, she went to the next village on an errand," replied his wife.

"That is capital!" said Takebe, growing more and more pleased. "Send this child with our boy to an inner room, and let them play together."

"Now," said Tonami, turning to the class of schoolboys, who had been more assiduous than ever since their master's return, "all of you may have a holiday. Run away and play in the garden!"

After sending her two special charges into the next room, and looking around with suspicious eyes that no eavesdropper was lingering behind, she lowered her voice and half-whispered to her husband:

"When you came in you looked so harassed and troubled, but since you have seen that boy, your demeanour has suddenly undergone a complete change. What can be the reason for this? Something unexpected must have happened! Won't you let me share the secret?"

"It is quite natural that I should have been so perplexed and dumbfounded," answered Takebe. "To deceive me they pretended to be giving a feast, and invited me to the residence of the village mayor, but when I arrived I soon found the feast was all a myth, and the house was in the occupation of Shundo Gamba, vassal of Tokihira, and another man, Matsuo by name, who is under great obligations of gratitude to the ex-Prime Minister, but who has deserted the house of Sugawara, and now shamefully serves the enemy, Tokihira. It seems as though he must

have been appointed to examine the head of our young lord, for it has leaked out that he is here under our guardianship, and Tokihira has ordered him to be beheaded. These two men, with some hundred followers, surrounded me in a hostile manner, with this threat:

"We have received information that you are secreting the only son of the ex-Prime Minister in your house, disguised as your own child. Unless you kill him at once and bring his head to us, we will attack you and slay him ourselves.

"As no alternative was left me, I was compelled to pretend to assent to their proposal. I thought that amongst our pupils surely there would be one sufficiently like to be sacrificed in his stead, but when I came home and was confronted by all that row of plebian faces, it was an obvious fact that not a single one would answer the purpose. All those young boors are of a common and vulgar type, and as unlike as possible to the aristocratic face and noble bearing of our palace-reared boy. Despair seized me, but--when I saw the new pupil--it seemed as if he had been specially sent by Providence as a substitute. The difference between them is not so great as that between a crow and a white heron. If I can deceive them but for a short time with that boy's head, I intend to escape to Kawachi with the young prince."

His wife broke in:

"But that man, Matsuo, has known Kanshusai intimately since he was three years old. How could he be deceived?"

"There lies the difficulty," said Genzo, "but after death faces always change to some extent, and as Kotaro unmistakably bears some resemblance to our young master, even Matsuo may be deceived. At any rate we will risk it. In the event that the ruse is discovered, I am determined to kill Matsuo at once, and try to cut my way through the guards as best I can, but if they are too strong for me, I will die with the young prince. Such is my decision, but the chief anxiety at present is concerning the mother of that boy. If she should come back before this can be achieved, what course of action can we decide on?"

"Leave her to me! I will try to throw dust in her eyes!" suggested Tonami.

"No, no, that won't do--a great plan often fails through some small mistake." Then, after a moment's reflection, he added, "Oh, well--I suppose she must die, too!"

"What!" cried his wife, in alarm.

"Be quiet," admonished her husband. "For the young lord's sake we must stop at nothing. It is for our master's sake, remember that!"

"Yes, yes, if we are weak we shall fail in our great scheme. Let us become devils. There is not much difference between pupils and one's own children. That boy became our pupil at this critical moment--heaven must have delivered him into our hands as the result of his mother's sin in a former existence. Oh, well! the same fate may overtake us before long--" At this point their pent-up feelings gave way, and both of them shed tears.

Shortly afterwards Gemba and Matsuo arrived at the gate. They were closely followed by a number of villagers, the parents of the common pupils in the school. In great excitement, one and all were loudly clamouring for the safety of their own children.

Matsuo almost laughed. The situation was one of such grim comedy. Each peasant evidently thought his own son might easily pass for the young aristocrat!

"Oh, mine is a beautiful boy," shouted one man. "You mustn't make any mistake between my son and the real victim. Give me my boy--" he turned fiercely to Gemba.

"You need have no apprehension whatever regarding your children," said Gemba, calmly addressing the alarmed parents, who now squatted on the ground with their heads bowed in the dust, "if you want them, you are at liberty to take them away at once!"

Matsuo, who was in a kago, [7] here stepped out, using his long sword as a stick to lean upon. Both he and Gemba sat on stools, which their attendants placed ready.

"Just wait a little," said he--"we cannot be too careful even with these villagers. The reason why I accepted the office of examiner is because there is no one else who knows the young prince's head as well as I do. These people allowed the young Sugawara to live in this village, so very likely they may have sympathy with the ex-Prime Minister and may claim his son now, pretending that he is one of their own family, and so aid him to escape! Who knows?"

Then, turning to the agitated peasants, he said to them, "Now, my men, you may call out your children's names one by one. I will examine each face carefully. Your own boys shall be safely restored to you, rest assured of that!"

The schoolmaster and his wife, from the house, overheard all that was going on, and Matsuo's determined and arrogant demeanour only served to intensify their fears. It was going to be even more difficult than they had apprehended.

An elderly man came forward, and in a loud voice, called out:

"Chomatsu, Chomatsu!"

In answer, an ill-favoured, pock-marked boy ran out, his face covered with smudges of Indian ink.

Matsuo glanced at him.

"The difference is as great as between snow and charcoal. He may go!" In turn, all the rest of the pupils were searchingly inspected, but not one bore the slightest resemblance to the ill-fated Kanshusai. When the pacified villagers had carried away all their offspring in triumph, Gemba and Matsuo entered the schoolmaster's house.

"Genzo!" began Gemba, in tones of authority, "you promised to behead the young Sugawara--I will receive that head now!"

Without betraying the least sign of feeling, Genzo replied:

"Yes, but he is the son of the ex-Prime Minister. We cannot slaughter him like a common boy. Please wait for a short time!"

"Oh, you cannot deceive us," said Matsuo, quickly. "Dallying in this way is merely pretext for gaining time. But it is useless for you to attempt to disappear now, the rear of the house is guarded by some hundred men, and there is no room even for an ant to escape. You may produce a substitute head, with the explanation that a dead and a living face have a different appearance. I shall not be taken in by a subterfuge. Such tricks on your part will only lead to repentance!"

This last thrust hit Genzo hard, but he did not lose his self-possession and answered Matsuo quietly,

"What a far-fetched idea! Your eyes, after your long illness, may not be able to see things clearly, but I will surely give you the head of the young lord you demand."

"Before your tongue is dry," exclaimed Gemba, impatiently, "behead him at once!"

"It shall be done!" replied Takebe, and went into an inner room. His wife, who had listened to all that transpired, was in an agony of anxiety, pale and trembling. Matsuo, with sharp eyes, was looking round the room.

"It is rather mysterious," he said, suddenly, "eight pupils have gone home, and yet, there are nine desks. What has become of the owner of that extra desk?"

Tonami started. She began to explain that there was a new pupil. Matsuo saw her vacillation. In an undertone, he said: "What a fool you are! Keep quiet!" Then, realizing how fatal such a mistake would be--Tonami collected herself and managed to stammer out. "That is the young Sugawara's desk!"

But her confusion had been noticed by the enemy. Gemba started to his feet and shouted in furious tones,

"This trifling will cause the frustration of our plans!"

At that moment the sound of a sword broke the silence as it fell swishing through the air, the screens of the room shook, and before Matsuo and Gemba could reach the partition which separated the inner from the outer room, Takebe appeared, carrying a white wooden tray. A cover hid what was beneath, but a thin trail of crimson blood was ominously oozing from the edge. Kneeling on the mats before the two men, he placed his ghastly burden before them.

"There was no alternative, so I was forced to behead the young lord. May Heaven forgive me! As it is a matter of such importance that there should be no mistake--please examine it carefully."

With these words, Takebe's hand stealthily fell upon his sword-hilt. Every fibre was on the alert to cut down Matsuo the moment he realized the deception that had been practised on him.

"I will certainly do so," replied Matsuo, nonchalantly, then, addressing some of the soldiers who had followed him into the room, he peremptorily gave them the command:

"Now surround the Takebe couple!"

From the rear of the house several guards entered and took up their posts at the porch, and just behind Genzo and his wife.

The strain was almost too great for the poor woman, and she was well-nigh fainting with the sickening uncertainty of what might be the last act of that dreadful drama. Gemba, looking on, took note keenly of the proceedings.

Everything hung on Matsuo's decision. The suspense of the moment was agonizing in its intensity.

He slowly lifted the blood-rimmed cover from the wooden tray. A boy's decapitated head was exposed to view. It was the head of little Kotaro.

Takebe's eyes were riveted on Matsuo. Defiantly he swore that Matsuo

should draw his last breath the moment he declared the head to be a subterfuge. As a tiger ready to spring on its prey, the desperate man watched the judge on whose next word hung all their lives.

Tonami was praying to the Gods in silent fervour that the truth might not be discovered, tremblingly she clutched a short sword hidden beneath her robe, which her husband had surreptitiously handed her, in preparation for the worst.

Matsuo deliberately examined the head of his own son--carefully and searchingly from every side he scrutinized the little face, now so still and pallid, sometimes his eyes blinked to hide the gathering tears, and once his face contracted with pain, but at last he loudly pronounced the momentous verdict:

"Oh, there can be no doubt that this is the head of Kanshusai, the son of the Lord Sugawara." Triumph, at the success of his loyal plot, conquered every other feeling and he slammed the lid back into place.

Gemba, delighted that there had been no mistake, and that the gruesome commission had been successfully carried out, accorded words of praise to Takebe for beheading the boy.

"As a reward for this deed, you will be pardoned for harbouring him so long! Let us hasten to take the head to Lord Tokihira," he said, turning to Matsuo.

"Yes, it is better that no time should be lost," responded the latter, "but as my duty is now finished, may I request to be discharged on sick leave?"

"Certainly," Gemba replied, "as your mission is satisfactorily concluded, you may go."

He then took up the tray with the bleeding head, strode to the door, and calling his attendants, pompously set out at once for Tokihira's palace. Outside the gate he stopped and mockingly addressed Takebe: "Ha, ha, ha!" he laughed, "though you take great care of the boy usually, when your own life is in danger you do not fail to cut off his head! ha, ha, ha!" and the cruel man, with this parting sneer, went on his ruthless way. Matsuo silently followed him out of the house and got into his kago.

The husband and wife, now that they were left alone, were quite exhausted from the emotion and stress of the past hour. They went out and closed the gates. Both were speechless with joy for some minutes. The master, sighing with relief, bowed his head and turned to the four points of the compass, silently returning thanks to the deities whose help he had invoked.

[Illustration: This is the head of Kanshusai, the son of the Lord Sugawara.]

"Oh, Heaven be praised!" he exclaimed at last. "The Gods have accorded their mighty aid to our cause and mercifully caused Matsuo's eyes to be dimmed, so that he mistook the other boy's head for that of our young prince. Heaven has clearly interposed to help our lord. Let us rejoice, my wife!"

"Yes, yes," she answered, "what a terrible strain it has been! In some unfathomable way the spirit of our lord must have cast a veil over Matsuo's eyes, or that head may have become a golden Buddha to help our cause. Though there was a slight resemblance between the two boys, yet they differ in reality as much as brick from gold. I was so transported at the success of our plan, that I almost wept aloud with the poignancy of joy when I saw that Matsuo was deceived."

When the loyal couple had given vent to their feelings, simultaneously they rushed to the side-room, where they had concealed their precious charge. The one from the side and the other from the front pushed aside the screens. Genzo then raised one of the tatami (a padded mat three feet by six feet), disclosing a cavity in the floor, out of which rose up the aristocratic form of Kanshusai, safe and untouched by his enemies. They gazed at him in silence--overwhelmed.

Suddenly, a knocking at the gate and the voice of Kotaro's mother disturbed them.

"I am the mother of the new pupil. Let me in!"

Startled, they hastily closed the screens. At this turn of events Tonami was at her wits' end, and knew not what to do for the best. She ran to and fro across the room like one demented.

Seeing that Tonami was losing her self-control and was about to burst out into excited speech, her husband enveloped his hand in the sleeve of his robe and covered her mouth. He held her still with grim determination.

"Remember what I said a short time ago. It means simply this--nothing is so precious as our young lord. You weak creature!" he added, with disdain, as he saw his wife's trepidation. Then he turned and went to the entrance.

"I fear my naughty boy must be giving you a great deal of trouble," said the new-comer, as Takebe let her in, "but what has become of him now?"

To gain time, Takebe replied, little knowing that he was confronted by a soul as strong in loyalty to the Sugawara as his own:

"He is in the house playing with the other children--school is over for to-day, so you must take him back with you."

"Very well," she assented, and started towards the house.

Directly her back was turned, Takebe drew his sword and tried to cut her down from behind. O Chiyo, a _samurai_ woman, was a trained fencer. She swiftly comprehended the meaning of Takebe's movement, even before he drew his sword, the sound, as it left its sheath, confirming what her alert senses divined. Quick as lightning she darted aside, barely escaping the deadly weapon as it tried to compass her destruction. Again and again the desperate man thrust at her. All would be lost even now, if this woman discovered that her boy had been slain to save their lord's son. With a box which she carried in her hand, O Chiyo skilfully parried the blows.

"Wait, wait! What is the matter?" she gasped out. But her frenzied antagonist was far too excited to listen, and he struck out with such good-will that the box, which served her as a shield, was speedily cut in two, and there appeared, unfolding and fluttering in the breeze as they fell, a little winding sheet, and a sacred banner used for the dead, bearing in black hieroglyphics, the inscription, "_Namu Amida Butsu_" (All hail, Great Buddha!)

Takebe's hand was paralyzed by this unexpected apparition. Bewildered as to what this could mean, he glanced inquiringly at O Chiyo.

"Was my boy considered worthy to take the place of our young lord or not?" she asked, meeting his gaze steadily with her clear eyes. "Tell me the truth!"

At such totally unlooked-for words, Takebe was confounded more than ever. Was it possible that the enemy he was seeking to destroy had unexpectedly become a friend?

"Oh, oh!" he stammered, "Did you understand and anticipate all this?"

"Yes, of course," answered the brave mother. "As I anticipated everything, I prepared and brought these things in Kotaro's box."

"Whose wife are you?" cried the astonished man, as he sheathed his sword.

Before she could answer a voice from outside the gate chanted a poem:

Ume[8] wa tobi

Sakura[8]_wa karuru_
Yono naka ni
Nani tote Matsu[8]_wa_
Tsure na kakuran.

In my service
Plum blossom has fled
The Cherry has withered
How then can the Pine be
Heartless to me?

"Rejoice, my wife! Our boy has done his duty!" When these brief words conveyed to the heroic woman that the sacrifice had been consummated in the tragic fate of her cherished son, her brave spirit failed her, and she fell unconscious to the ground.

"What a poor creature you are!" exclaimed her husband, as he entered the room.

At the unexpected arrival of Matsuo, the schoolmaster and his wife were more confused than ever, but with an effort Takebe attempted to regain his self-possession.

[Illustration: The box, which served her as a shield, was speedily cut in two, and there appeared, unfolding and fluttering in the breeze, a little winding-sheet and a sacred banner for the dead]

"I will use more ceremonious speech afterwards. You Matsuo, whom we all believed a traitor to behave like this! What is the meaning of it all?"

"It is quite natural that you cannot understand. We were three brothers. All were faithful vassals of Michizane, the Minister of the Right, to whom my family was deeply indebted. I, Matsuo, latterly entered the service of Tokihira, and on this account I was disowned by my father. I dissimulated thus, the better to serve Lord Sugawara. However, the position proved intolerable, and to get my dismissal I feigned illness. It was at this juncture that the news of where Kanshusai was concealed reached the ears of Tokihira. A messenger informed me that I would be released from office if I would undertake the mission of securing the head of our young lord. I felt sure that you would never commit such a crime, but if no substitute could be procured I knew that you would be desperate. Thinking that the time had come to repay the debt of gratitude to our generous benefactor, I consulted with my wife, and we sent our own boy to take the place of his son. That is why I counted the number of desks, to see if he were already here or not. Lord Sugawara composed the poem I quoted just now, showing his discernment of my character. In that poem he asks, 'How can the pine be heartless towards me?' But the world, in general, interpreted those lines in a contrary sense, and everyone denounced me

as a cowardly deserter. You may imagine, Genzo, how I resented this. If I had had no son, I must have passed as a traitor all my life. There is no possession so precious as a son."

O Chiyo, who had meanwhile recovered from her faint, was intently listening to her husband's explanations with a composed demeanour. But at these words she could restrain her emotion no longer, and sobbed aloud.

"Oh, how our Kotaro must rejoice although in another world, to hear such sentiments from his father. Those words are his best requiem. When I left him a short time ago, he looked unusually sad--for his childish mind understood that he was about to die. I intended to go home and deceive him, saying that I was going to the next village and would return soon. But I could not go home. Oh! the yearning to see even his dead face once more was so great that I came back. You may scoff at my weakness, but my sorrow is well-nigh unendurable. Had our Kotaro been born ugly, and brought up as a common child, he might not have suffered such a death. But as he was beautiful, obedient, and good, he was chosen for the sacrifice. Could I have known his untimely fate I would never have found fault with him. Oh, my son, my little, little son!"

And the poor woman, overcome with the poignancy of her grief and the bitterness of her renunciation, fell with her face to the mats, trying to suppress the rending sobs which seemed to tear her breast asunder.

Here Tonami came close to the sorrowing mother and murmured in tones of sympathy:

"Only a short hour ago, when my husband had decided that he should be the substitute for the young prince, Kotaro came up to him and said, innocently, 'Master, please take care of me!' When I think of this, though I am but a stranger, I feel as if my heart would break. I can imagine how desolate his true mother must be to lose such a sweet child," and the tears fell from her eyes.

"No, no, Tonami! No, no, my wife! You must not weep. It was our own decision to let him die in the place of our young lord. You, O Chiyo, ought to be ashamed to give way like this before strangers. But," and Matsuo turned anxiously to Takebe, "although I carefully explained to my boy the reason for his fate, and how he should die with dignity, tell me, did he meet death in a miserable way, or did he die like a _samurai_?"

"Yes, oh, yes!" Takebe quickly replied. "When I told the brave boy that his head must be cut off to save our young lord, the child of his benefactor, he calmly and courageously, without a word, placed his neck in readiness for the sword--he did not attempt either to hide or to escape from his impending doom. You must have taught him well--he even

smiled at the last--rest assured of that!"

The schoolmaster could say no more, with strong restraint he tried to hide his feelings and pretended to laugh, but the forced mirth ended with a choking sound in his throat.

At this point the stoic father broke down and wept, and as he wiped away the slow tears, he said, in a low voice: "He was both good and clever, was our little Kotaro. Even at the age of nine he takes the place of his parents to prove our gratitude to our lord. He is a filial child--a fortunate child to be able to do that I The more I think of it the more it recalls my brother, Sakura Maru. He died without being able to make any return for the obligation he was under to his lord. How he must envy our boy!"

"Oh, Kotaro soon followed him to another world!" wailed O Chiyo, and with these words she burst into another paroxysm of grief.

The young Sugawara, the innocent cause of this tragedy, overhearing the poor mother's heart-rending sobs, came out from an inner room, pale and awe-stricken:

"If I had only known that he was going to die for me, I would not have allowed it--oh--how sad! how sad!" he exclaimed, and with his long sleeve, he wiped away the tears from his eyes.

Matsuo and his wife turned and bowed to the little fellow while he spoke. For this boy's sake their family must sink into oblivion and nothingness, and be no longer remembered among the living; for his sake there would be no one to keep up the rites of the dead before their ancestors' tombs or their own, when they should be no more. On this altar of loyalty to his father's house they had offered all that this world held for them of joy, hope, and ambition. On this altar they had laid up for themselves a cheerless, desolate, childless old age. To this sublime ideal of duty, unhesitatingly, unflinchingly, regardless of themselves and the acuteness of their sufferings, these simple martyr-souls had made this great renunciation. That the young lord should realize this sacrifice they had not in the least expected. His words surprised them. It was balm to their stricken hearts, that even in some small measure he could appreciate what they had done for him.

Then Matsuo rose and went to the porch.

"I have brought a present for our young master," and with a whistle, he summoned a _kago_ that had been waiting in the garden. As soon as the bearers set it down out stepped the Lady Sugawara.

"Oh, my mother! My mother!" almost shouted the boy, as she quickly entered the house, her long mantle of gold brocade and crimson linings

flashing colour as she moved.

"Oh, my son, my beloved son!" cried the overjoyed mother, folding the child to her heart.

The schoolmaster and his wife exclaimed with joy when they realized the identity of the new-comer. After their respectful greetings, Takebe said:

"I have been long striving to discover your hiding place. Where can your ladyship have taken refuge all this time?"

Matsuo answered for her:

"When her ladyship was hiding in the suburbs, Tokihira's retainers got scent of her retreat and nearly succeeded in taking her prisoner. Knowing her danger I disguised myself as a _yamabushi_ [9] and managed to rescue her just in time, so she has been concealed in my house ever since. Without delay you must now escort her and Kanshusai to Kawachi,[10]--so that they may once more be a united family, safe from the pursuit of their enemies."

Then, turning to his wife, he added, "Now let us carry home the body of Kotaro and begin the preparations for his funeral rites."

But before O Chiyo could answer, Tonami reverently carried the headless body of the slain child to the _kago_. O Chiyo followed, and kneeling, placed over Kotaro the white shroud and the sacred banner.

Matsuo and his wife then took off their outer robes, revealing the white garments of ceremonial mourning in readiness for the obsequies. Takebe and his wife made a gesture of surprise and deprecation.

"It is against custom that parents should attend the funeral of their own son. Let us spare you this trial--we will do everything in your place!" they cried.

"No, no," said Matsuo, loyal unto death, even the death of his only son for the sake of his lord, "this is not the body of my boy. We are going to bury our young lord!"

[Illustration: "No, no," said Matsuo ... "this is not the body of my boy.... We are going to bury our young lord!"]

With these words, Matsuo and his wife took their farewells. Then, turning in silence, they followed the impromptu bier which bore all that was left to them of their well-beloved child, and with bowed heads reverently wended their way towards their now desolate and empty home. Lady Sugawara, her son, Genzo and Tonami, with tears falling from their eyes, watched the little procession slowly disappear down the road into

the deepening shadows of the night.

Note.--"The memory of the unfortunate statesman, Sugawara-no-Michizane, is surrounded by a halo of romance which affords an insight into Japanese character. He belonged to an ancient family of professional litterateurs, and had none of the titles which in that age were commonly considered essential to official preferment. By extraordinary scholarship, singular sweetness of disposition, and unswerving fidelity to justice and truth he won a high reputation, and had he been content with the fame his writings brought him, and with promoting the cause of scholarship, through the medium of a school which he endowed, he might have ended his days in peace. But, in an evil hour, he accepted office, and thus found himself required to discharge the duties of statesmanship at a time of extreme difficulty, when an immense interval separated the rich and the poor, when the arbitrariness and extortions of the local governors had become a burning question, when the nobles and the princes were crushing the people with merciless taxes, and when the finances of the Court were in extreme disorder. Michizane, a gentle conservative, was not fitted to cope with these difficulties, and his situation at Court was complicated by the favour of an ex-Emperor (Uda) who had abdicated but still sought to take part in the administration, and by the jealousy of the Fujiwara representative, Tokihira, a young, impetuous, arrogant, but highly gifted nobleman. These two men, Michizane and Tokihira, became the central figures in a very unequal struggle, the forces on the one side being the whole Fujiwara clan, headed by the unscrupulously daring and ambitious Tokihira; those on the other, a few scholars, the love and respect of the lower orders, and the benevolent tolerance of the self-effacing Michizane. The end was inevitable. Michizane, falsely accused of conspiring to obtain the throne for his grandson--an Imperial prince had married his daughter--was banished to Dazaifu, and his family and friends were either killed or reduced to serfdom. The story is not remarkable. It contains no great crises or dazzling incidents. Yet if Michizane had been the most brilliant statesman and the most successful general ever possessed by Japan, his name could not have been handed down through all generations of his countrymen with greater veneration and affection."--BRINKLEY, "Japan: Its History Arts and Literature," p. 256.

[Footnote 1: In the ancient Imperial Court there were two supreme Ministers in the Council of State; first the Minister of the Left (_Sadaijin_ --next in rank to the Prime Minister), and second, the Minister of the Right (_Udaijin_).]

[Footnote 2: The Fujiwara Minister.]

[Footnote 3: _Ronin_, a _samurai_ who has severed relations with his lord for the sake, generally, of carrying out some plan which would entail disgrace if unsuccessful.]

[Footnote 4: Where Sugawara was exiled.]

[Footnote 5: _Obi_, the sash or girdle.]

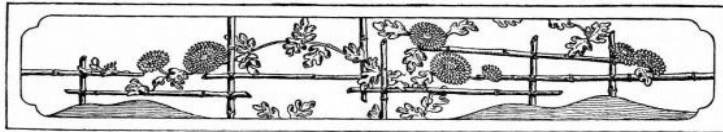
[Footnote 6: _Shoji_, sliding paper door.]

[Footnote 7: _Kago_, a palanquin.]

[Footnote 8: _Matsu_, the first hieroglyphic of Matsuo's name. _Ume_ (plum blossom), and _Sakura_ (cherry), were the names of Matsuo's brothers.]

[Footnote 9: _Yamabushi_, a wandering priest.]

[Footnote 10: Kawachi: where the friends of Sugawara were the strongest.]



THE GENTLE LIFE

The Project Gutenberg EBook of *The Ruling Passion*, by Henry van Dyke

Do you remember that fair little wood of silver birches on the West Branch of the Neversink, somewhat below the place where the Biscuit Brook runs in? There is a mossy terrace raised a couple of feet above the water of a long, still pool; and a very pleasant spot for a friendship-fire on the shingly beach below you; and a plenty of painted trilliums and yellow violets and white foam-flowers to adorn your woodland banquet, if it be spread in the month of May, when Mistress Nature is given over to embroidery.

It was there, at Contentment Corner, that Ned Mason had promised to meet me on a certain day for the noontide lunch and smoke and talk, he fishing down Biscuit Brook, and I down the West Branch, until we came together at the rendezvous. But he was late that day--good old Ned! He was occasionally behind time on a trout stream. For he went about his fishing very seriously; and if it was fine, the sport was a natural occasion of delay. But if it was poor, he made it an occasion to sit down to meditate upon the cause of his failure, and tried to overcome it with many subtly reasoned changes of the fly--which is a vain thing to do, but well adapted to make one forgetful of the flight of time.

So I waited for him near an hour, and then ate my half of the sandwiches and boiled eggs, smoked a solitary pipe, and fell into a light sleep at

the foot of the biggest birch tree, an old and trusty friend of mine. It seemed like a very slight sound that roused me: the snapping of a dry twig in the thicket, or a gentle splash in the water, differing in some indefinable way from the steady murmur of the stream; something it was, I knew not what, that made me aware of some one coming down the brook. I raised myself quietly on one elbow and looked up through the trees to the head of the pool. "Ned will think that I have gone down long ago," I said to myself; "I will just lie here and watch him fish through this pool, and see how he manages to spend so much time about it."

But it was not Ned's rod that I saw poking out through the bushes at the bend in the brook. It was such an affair as I had never seen before upon a trout stream: a majestic weapon at least sixteen feet long, made in two pieces, neatly spliced together in the middle, and all painted a smooth, glistening, hopeful green. The line that hung from the tip of it was also green, but of a paler, more transparent colour, quite thick and stiff where it left the rod, but tapering down towards the end, as if it were twisted of strands of horse-hair, reduced in number, until, at the hook, there were but two hairs. And the hook--there was no disguise about that--it was an unabashed bait-hook, and well baited, too. Gently the line swayed to and fro above the foaming water at the head of the pool; quietly the bait settled down in the foam and ran with the current around the edge of the deep eddy under the opposite bank; suddenly the line straightened and tautened; sharply the tip of the long green rod sprang upward, and the fisherman stepped out from the bushes to play his fish.

Where had I seen such a figure before? The dress was strange and quaint--broad, low shoes, gray woollen stockings, short brown breeches tied at the knee with ribbons, a loose brown coat belted at the waist like a Norfolk jacket; a wide, rolling collar with a bit of lace at the edge, and a soft felt hat with a shady brim. It was a costume that, with all its oddity, seemed wonderfully fit and familiar. And the face? Certainly it was the face of an old friend. Never had I seen a countenance of more quietness and kindness and twinkling good humour.

"Well met, sir, and a pleasant day to you," cried the angler, as his eyes lighted on me. "Look you, I have hold of a good fish; I pray you put that net under him, and touch not my line, for if you do, then we break all. Well done, sir; I thank you. Now we have him safely landed. Truly this is a lovely one; the best that I have taken in these waters. See how the belly shines, here as yellow as a marsh-marigold, and there as white as a foam-flower. Is not the hand of Divine Wisdom as skilful in the colouring of a fish as in the painting of the manifold blossoms that sweeten these wild forests?"

"Indeed it is," said I, "and this is the biggest trout that I have seen caught in the upper waters of the Neversink. It is certainly eighteen inches long, and should weigh close upon two pounds and a half."

“More than that,” he answered, “if I mistake not. But I observe that you call it a trout. To my mind, it seems more like a char, as do all the fish that I have caught in your stream. Look here upon these curious water-markings that run through the dark green of the back, and these enamellings of blue and gold upon the side. Note, moreover, how bright and how many are the red spots, and how each one of them is encircled with a ring of purple. Truly it is a fish of rare beauty, and of high esteem with persons of note. I would gladly know if it be as good to the taste as I have heard it reputed.”

“It is even better,” I replied; “as you shall find, if you will but try it.”

Then a curious impulse came to me, to which I yielded with as little hesitation or misgiving, at the time, as if it were the most natural thing in the world.

“You seem a stranger in this part of the country, sir,” said I; “but unless I am mistaken you are no stranger to me. Did you not use to go a-fishing in the New River, with honest Nat. and R. Roe, many years ago? And did they not call you Izaak Walton?”

His eyes smiled pleasantly at me and a little curve of merriment played around his lips. “It is a secret which I thought not to have been discovered here,” he said; “but since you have lit upon it, I will not deny it.”

Now how it came to pass that I was not astonished nor dismayed at this, I cannot explain. But so it was; and the only feeling of which I was conscious was a strong desire to detain this visitor as long as possible, and have some talk with him. So I grasped at the only expedient that flashed into my mind.

“Well, then, sir,” I said, “you are most heartily welcome, and I trust you will not despise the only hospitality I have to offer. If you will sit down here among these birch trees in Contentment Corner, I will give you half of a fisherman's luncheon, and will cook your char for you on a board before an open wood-fire, if you are not in a hurry. Though I belong to a nation which is reported to be curious, I will promise to trouble you with no inquisitive questions; and if you will but talk to me at your will, you shall find me a ready listener.”

So we made ourselves comfortable on the shady bank, and while I busied myself in splitting the fish and pinning it open on a bit of board that I had found in a pile of driftwood, and setting it up before the fire to broil, my new companion entertained me with the sweetest and friendliest talk that I had ever heard.

“To speak without offence, sir,” he began, “there was a word in your discourse a moment ago that seemed strange to me. You spoke of being 'in a hurry'; and that is an expression which is unfamiliar to my ears; but if it mean the same as being in haste, then I must tell you that this is a thing which, in my judgment, honest anglers should learn to forget, and have no dealings with it. To be in haste is to be in anxiety and distress of mind; it is to mistrust Providence, and to doubt that the issue of all events is in wiser hands than ours; it is to disturb the course of nature, and put overmuch confidence in the importance of our own endeavours.

“For how much of the evil that is in the world cometh from this plaguy habit of being in haste! The haste to get riches, the haste to climb upon some pinnacle of worldly renown, the haste to resolve mysteries--from these various kinds of haste are begotten no small part of the miseries and afflictions whereby the children of men are tormented: such as quarrels and strifes among those who would over-reach one another in business; envyings and jealousies among those who would outshine one another in rich apparel and costly equipage; bloody rebellions and cruel wars among those who would obtain power over their fellow-men; cloudy disputations and bitter controversies among those who would fain leave no room for modest ignorance and lowly faith among the secrets of religion; and by all these miseries of haste the heart grows weary, and is made weak and dull, or else hard and angry, while it dwelleth in the midst of them.

“But let me tell you that an angler's occupation is a good cure for these evils, if for no other reason, because it gently dissuadeth us from haste and leadeth us away from feverish anxieties into those ways which are pleasantness and those paths which are peace. For an angler cannot force his fortune by eagerness, nor better it by discontent. He must wait upon the weather, and the height of the water, and the hunger of the fish, and many other accidents of which he has no control. If he would angle well, he must not be in haste. And if he be in haste, he will do well to unlearn it by angling, for I think there is no surer method.

“This fair tree that shadows us from the sun hath grown many years in its place without more unhappiness than the loss of its leaves in winter, which the succeeding season doth generously repair; and shall we be less contented in the place where God hath planted us? or shall there go less time to the making of a man than to the growth of a tree? This stream floweth wimpling and laughing down to the great sea which it knoweth not; yet it doth not fret because the future is hidden; and doubtless it were wise in us to accept the mysteries of life as cheerfully and go forward with a merry heart, considering that we know enough to make us happy and keep us honest for to-day. A man should be well content if he can see so far ahead of him as the next bend in the stream. What lies beyond, let him trust in the hand of God.

“But as concerning riches, wherein should you and I be happier, this pleasant afternoon of May, had we all the gold in Croesus his coffers? Would the sun shine for us more bravely, or the flowers give forth a sweeter breath, or yonder warbling vireo, hidden in her leafy choir, send down more pure and musical descants, sweetly attuned by natural magic to woo and win our thoughts from vanity and hot desires into a harmony with the tranquil thoughts of God? And as for fame and power, trust me, sir, I have seen too many men in my time that lived very unhappily though their names were upon all lips, and died very sadly though their power was felt in many lands; too many of these great ones have I seen that spent their days in disquietude and ended them in sorrow, to make me envy their conditions or hasten to rival them. Nor do I think that, by all their perturbations and fightings and runnings to and fro, the world hath been much bettered, or even greatly changed. The colour and complexion of mortal life, in all things that are essential, remain the same under Cromwell or under Charles. The goodness and mercy of God are still over all His works, whether Presbytery or Episcopacy be set up as His interpreter. Very quietly and peacefully have I lived under several polities, civil and ecclesiastical, and under all there was room enough to do my duty and love my friends and go a-fishing. And let me tell you, sir, that in the state wherein I now find myself, though there are many things of which I may not speak to you, yet one thing is clear: if I had made haste in my mortal concerns, I should not have saved time, but lost it; for all our affairs are under one sure dominion which moveth them forward to their concordant end: wherefore 'HE THAT BELIEVETH SHALL NOT MAKE HASTE,' and, above all, not when he goeth a-angling.

“But tell me, I pray you, is not this char cooked yet? Methinks the time is somewhat overlong for the roasting. The fragrant smell of the cookery gives me an eagerness to taste this new dish. Not that I am in haste, but--

“Well, it is done; and well done, too! Marry, the flesh of this fish is as red as rose-leaves, and as sweet as if he had fed on nothing else. The flavour of smoke from the fire is but slight, and it takes nothing from the perfection of the dish, but rather adds to it, being clean and delicate. I like not these French cooks who make all dishes in disguise, and set them forth with strange foreign savours, like a masquerade. Give me my food in its native dress, even though it be a little dry. If we had but a cup of sack, now, or a glass of good ale, and a pipeful of tobacco?

“What! you have an abundance of the fragrant weed in your pouch? Sir, I thank you very heartily! You entertain me like a prince. Not like King James, be it understood, who despised tobacco and called it a 'lively image and pattern of hell'; nor like the Czar of Russia who commanded that all who used it should have their noses cut off; but like good

Queen Bess of glorious memory, who disdained not the incense of the pipe, and some say she used one herself; though for my part I think the custom of smoking one that is more fitting for men, whose frailty and need of comfort are well known, than for that fairer sex whose innocent and virgin spirits stand less in want of creature consolations.

“But come, let us not trouble our enjoyment with careful discrimination of others' scruples. Your tobacco is rarely good; I'll warrant it comes from that province of Virginia which was named for the Virgin Queen; and while we smoke together, let me call you, for this hour, my Scholar; and so I will give you four choice rules for the attainment of that unhastened quietude of mind whereof we did lately discourse.

“First: you shall learn to desire nothing in the world so much but that you can be happy without it.

“Second: you shall seek that which you desire only by such means as are fair and lawful, and this will leave you without bitterness towards men or shame before God.

“Third: you shall take pleasure in the time while you are seeking, even though you obtain not immediately that which you seek; for the purpose of a journey is not only to arrive at the goal, but also to find enjoyment by the way.

“Fourth: when you attain that which you have desired, you shall think more of the kindness of your fortune than of the greatness of your skill. This will make you grateful, and ready to share with others that which Providence hath bestowed upon you; and truly this is both reasonable and profitable, for it is but little that any of us would catch in this world were not our luck better than our deserts.

“And to these Four Rules I will add yet another--Fifth: when you smoke your pipe with a good conscience, trouble not yourself because there are men in the world who will find fault with you for so doing. If you wait for a pleasure at which no sour-complexioned soul hath ever girded, you will wait long, and go through life with a sad and anxious mind. But I think that God is best pleased with us when we give little heed to scoffers, and enjoy His gifts with thankfulness and an easy heart.

“Well, Scholar, I have almost tired myself, and, I fear, more than almost tired you. But this pipe is nearly burned out, and the few short whiffs that are left in it shall put a period to my too long discourse. Let me tell you, then, that there be some men in the world who hold not with these my opinions. They profess that a life of contention and noise and public turmoil, is far higher than a life of quiet work and meditation. And so far as they follow their own choice honestly and with a pure mind, I doubt not that it is as good for them as mine is for me, and I am well pleased that every man do enjoy his own opinion. But so

far as they have spoken ill of me and my opinions, I do hold it a thing of little consequence, except that I am sorry that they have thereby embittered their own hearts.

“For this is the punishment of men who malign and revile those that differ from them in religion, or prefer another way of living; their revilings, by so much as they spend their wit and labour to make them shrewd and bitter, do draw all the sweet and wholesome sap out of their lives and turn it into poison; and so they become vessels of mockery and wrath, remembered chiefly for the evil things that they have said with cleverness.

“For be sure of this, Scholar, the more a man giveth himself to hatred in this world, the more will he find to hate. But let us rather give ourselves to charity, and if we have enemies (and what honest man hath them not?) let them be ours, since they must, but let us not be theirs, since we know better.

“There was one Franck, a trooper of Cromwell's, who wrote ill of me, saying that I neither understood the subjects whereof I discoursed nor believed the things that I said, being both silly and pretentious. It would have been a pity if it had been true. There was also one Leigh Hunt, a maker of many books, who used one day a bottle of ink whereof the gall was transfused into his blood, so that he wrote many hard words of me, setting forth selfishness and cruelty and hypocrisy as if they were qualities of my disposition. God knew, even then, whether these things were true of me; and if they were not true, it would have been a pity to have answered them; but it would have been still more a pity to be angered by them. But since that time Master Hunt and I have met each other; yes, and Master Franck, too; and we have come very happily to a better understanding.

“Trust me, Scholar, it is the part of wisdom to spend little of your time upon the things that vex and anger you, and much of your time upon the things that bring you quietness and confidence and good cheer. A friend made is better than an enemy punished. There is more of God in the peaceable beauty of this little wood-violet than in all the angry disputations of the sects. We are nearer heaven when we listen to the birds than when we quarrel with our fellow-men. I am sure that none can enter into the spirit of Christ, his evangel, save those who willingly follow his invitation when he says, 'COME YE YOURSELVES APART INTO A LONELY PLACE, AND REST A WHILE.' For since his blessed kingdom was first established in the green fields, by the lakeside, with humble fishermen for its subjects, the easiest way into it hath ever been through the wicket-gate of a lowly and grateful fellowship with nature. He that feels not the beauty and blessedness and peace of the woods and meadows that God hath bedecked with flowers for him even while he is yet a sinner, how shall he learn to enjoy the unfading bloom of the celestial country if he ever become a saint?

“No, no, sir, he that departeth out of this world without perceiving that it is fair and full of innocent sweetness hath done little honour to the every-day miracles of divine beneficence; and though by mercy he may obtain an entrance to heaven, it will be a strange place to him; and though he have studied all that is written in men's books of divinity, yet because he hath left the book of Nature unturned, he will have much to learn and much to forget. Do you think that to be blind to the beauties of earth prepareth the heart to behold the glories of heaven? Nay, Scholar, I know that you are not of that opinion. But I can tell you another thing which perhaps you knew not. The heart that is blest with the glories of heaven ceaseth not to remember and to love the beauties of this world. And of this love I am certain, because I feel it, and glad because it is a great blessing.

“There are two sorts of seeds sown in our remembrance by what we call the hand of fortune, the fruits of which do not wither, but grow sweeter forever and ever. The first is the seed of innocent pleasures, received in gratitude and enjoyed with good companions, of which pleasures we never grow weary of thinking, because they have enriched our hearts. The second is the seed of pure and gentle sorrows, borne in submission and with faithful love, and these also we never forget, but we come to cherish them with gladness instead of grief, because we see them changed into everlasting joys. And how this may be I cannot tell you now, for you would not understand me. But that it is so, believe me: for if you believe, you shall one day see it yourself.

“But come, now, our friendly pipes are long since burned out. Hark, how sweetly the tawny thrush in yonder thicket touches her silver harp for the evening hymn! I will follow the stream downward, but do you tarry here until the friend comes for whom you were waiting. I think we shall all three meet one another, somewhere, after sunset.”

I watched the gray hat and the old brown coat and long green rod disappear among the trees around the curve of the stream. Then Ned's voice sounded in my ears, and I saw him standing above me laughing.

“Hallo, old man,” he said, “you're a sound sleeper! I hope you've had good luck, and pleasant dreams.”



HOW MUCH LAND DOES A MAN NEED?

From Project Gutenberg's *What Men Live By and Other Tales*, by Leo Tolstoy

I

An elder sister came to visit her younger sister in the country. The elder was married to a tradesman in town, the younger to a peasant in the village. As the sisters sat over their tea talking, the elder began to boast of the advantages of town life: saying how comfortably they lived there, how well they dressed, what fine clothes her children wore, what good things they ate and drank, and how she went to the theatre, promenades, and entertainments.

The younger sister was piqued, and in turn disparaged the life of a tradesman, and stood up for that of a peasant.

"I would not change my way of life for yours," said she. "We may live roughly, but at least we are free from anxiety. You live in better style than we do, but though you often earn more than you need, you are very likely to lose all you have. You know the proverb, 'Loss and gain are brothers twain.' It often happens that people who are wealthy one day are begging their bread the next. Our way is safer. Though a peasant's life is not a fat one, it is a long one. We shall never grow rich, but we shall always have enough to eat."

The elder sister said sneeringly:

"Enough? Yes, if you like to share with the pigs and the calves! What do you know of elegance or manners! However much your good man may slave, you will die as you are living-on a dung heap-and your children the same."

"Well, what of that?" replied the younger. "Of course our work is rough and coarse. But, on the other hand, it is sure; and we need not bow to any one. But you, in your towns, are surrounded by temptations; today all may be right, but tomorrow the Evil One may tempt your husband with cards, wine, or women, and all will go to ruin. Don't such things happen often enough?"

Pahom, the master of the house, was lying on the top of the oven, and he listened to the women's chatter.

"It is perfectly true," thought he. "Busy as we are from childhood tilling Mother Earth, we peasants have no time to let any nonsense settle in our heads. Our only trouble is that we haven't land enough. If I had plenty of land, I shouldn't fear the Devil himself!"

The women finished their tea, chatted a while about dress, and then cleared away the tea-things and lay down to sleep.

But the Devil had been sitting behind the oven, and had heard all that was said. He was pleased that the peasant's wife had led her husband

into boasting, and that he had said that if he had plenty of land he would not fear the Devil himself.

"All right," thought the Devil. "We will have a tussle. I'll give you land enough; and by means of that land I will get you into my power."

II

Close to the village there lived a lady, a small landowner, who had an estate of about three hundred acres. She had always lived on good terms with the peasants, until she engaged as her steward an old soldier, who took to burdening the people with fines. However careful Pahom tried to be, it happened again and again that now a horse of his got among the lady's oats, now a cow strayed into her garden, now his calves found their way into her meadows-and he always had to pay a fine.

Pahom paid, but grumbled, and, going home in a temper, was rough with his family. All through that summer Pahom had much trouble because of this steward; and he was even glad when winter came and the cattle had to be stabled. Though he grudged the fodder when they could no longer graze on the pasture-land, at least he was free from anxiety about them.

In the winter the news got about that the lady was going to sell her land, and that the keeper of the inn on the high road was bargaining for it. When the peasants heard this they were very much alarmed.

"Well," thought they, "if the innkeeper gets the land he will worry us with fines worse than the lady's steward. We all depend on that estate."

So the peasants went on behalf of their Commune, and asked the lady not to sell the land to the innkeeper; offering her a better price for it themselves. The lady agreed to let them have it. Then the peasants tried to arrange for the Commune to buy the whole estate, so that it might be held by all in common. They met twice to discuss it, but could not settle the matter; the Evil One sowed discord among them, and they could not agree. So they decided to buy the land individually, each according to his means; and the lady agreed to this plan as she had to the other.

Presently Pahom heard that a neighbor of his was buying fifty acres, and that the lady had consented to accept one half in cash and to wait a year for the other half. Pahom felt envious.

"Look at that," thought he, "the land is all being sold, and I shall get none of it." So he spoke to his wife.

"Other people are buying," said he, "and we must also buy twenty acres

or so. Life is becoming impossible. That steward is simply crushing us with his fines."

So they put their heads together and considered how they could manage to buy it. They had one hundred roubles laid by. They sold a colt, and one half of their bees; hired out one of their sons as a laborer, and took his wages in advance; borrowed the rest from a brother-in-law, and so scraped together half the purchase money.

Having done this, Pahom chose out a farm of forty acres, some of it wooded, and went to the lady to bargain for it. They came to an agreement, and he shook hands with her upon it, and paid her a deposit in advance. Then they went to town and signed the deeds; he paying half the price down, and undertaking to pay the remainder within two years.

So now Pahom had land of his own. He borrowed seed, and sowed it on the land he had bought. The harvest was a good one, and within a year he had managed to pay off his debts both to the lady and to his brother-in-law. So he became a landowner, ploughing and sowing his own land, making hay on his own land, cutting his own trees, and feeding his cattle on his own pasture. When he went out to plough his fields, or to look at his growing corn, or at his grass meadows, his heart would fill with joy. The grass that grew and the flowers that bloomed there, seemed to him unlike any that grew elsewhere. Formerly, when he had passed by that land, it had appeared the same as any other land, but now it seemed quite different.

III

So Pahom was well contented, and everything would have been right if the neighboring peasants would only not have trespassed on his corn-fields and meadows. He appealed to them most civilly, but they still went on: now the Communal herdsmen would let the village cows stray into his meadows; then horses from the night pasture would get among his corn. Pahom turned them out again and again, and forgave their owners, and for a long time he forbore from prosecuting any one. But at last he lost patience and complained to the District Court. He knew it was the peasants' want of land, and no evil intent on their part, that caused the trouble; but he thought:

"I cannot go on overlooking it, or they will destroy all I have. They must be taught a lesson."

So he had them up, gave them one lesson, and then another, and two or three of the peasants were fined. After a time Pahom's neighbours began to bear him a grudge for this, and would now and then let their cattle

on his land on purpose. One peasant even got into Pahom's wood at night and cut down five young lime trees for their bark. Pahom passing through the wood one day noticed something white. He came nearer, and saw the stripped trunks lying on the ground, and close by stood the stumps, where the tree had been. Pahom was furious.

"If he had only cut one here and there it would have been bad enough," thought Pahom, "but the rascal has actually cut down a whole clump. If I could only find out who did this, I would pay him out."

He racked his brains as to who it could be. Finally he decided: "It must be Simon-no one else could have done it." So he went to Simon's homestead to have a look around, but he found nothing, and only had an angry scene. However' he now felt more certain than ever that Simon had done it, and he lodged a complaint. Simon was summoned. The case was tried, and re-tried, and at the end of it all Simon was acquitted, there being no evidence against him. Pahom felt still more aggrieved, and let his anger loose upon the Elder and the Judges.

"You let thieves grease your palms," said he. "If you were honest folk yourselves, you would not let a thief go free."

So Pahom quarrelled with the Judges and with his neighbors. Threats to burn his building began to be uttered. So though Pahom had more land, his place in the Commune was much worse than before.

About this time a rumor got about that many people were moving to new parts.

"There's no need for me to leave my land," thought Pahom. "But some of the others might leave our village, and then there would be more room for us. I would take over their land myself, and make my estate a bit bigger. I could then live more at ease. As it is, I am still too cramped to be comfortable."

One day Pahom was sitting at home, when a peasant passing through the village, happened to call in. He was allowed to stay the night, and supper was given him. Pahom had a talk with this peasant and asked him where he came from. The stranger answered that he came from beyond the Volga, where he had been working. One word led to another, and the man went on to say that many people were settling in those parts. He told how some people from his village had settled there. They had joined the Commune, and had had twenty-five acres per man granted them. The land was so good, he said, that the rye sown on it grew as high as a horse, and so thick that five cuts of a sickle made a sheaf. One peasant, he said, had brought nothing with him but his bare hands, and now he had six horses and two cows of his own.

Pahom's heart kindled with desire. He thought:

"Why should I suffer in this narrow hole, if one can live so well elsewhere? I will sell my land and my homestead here, and with the money I will start afresh over there and get everything new. In this crowded place one is always having trouble. But I must first go and find out all about it myself."

Towards summer he got ready and started. He went down the Volga on a steamer to Samara, then walked another three hundred miles on foot, and at last reached the place. It was just as the stranger had said. The peasants had plenty of land: every man had twenty-five acres of Communal land given him for his use, and any one who had money could buy, besides, at fifty-cents an acre as much good freehold land as he wanted.

Having found out all he wished to know, Pahom returned home as autumn came on, and began selling off his belongings. He sold his land at a profit, sold his homestead and all his cattle, and withdrew from membership of the Commune. He only waited till the spring, and then started with his family for the new settlement.

IV

As soon as Pahom and his family arrived at their new abode, he applied for admission into the Commune of a large village. He stood treat to the Elders, and obtained the necessary documents. Five shares of Communal land were given him for his own and his sons' use: that is to say--125 acres (not altogether, but in different fields) besides the use of the Communal pasture. Pahom put up the buildings he needed, and bought cattle. Of the Communal land alone he had three times as much as at his former home, and the land was good corn-land. He was ten times better off than he had been. He had plenty of arable land and pasturage, and could keep as many head of cattle as he liked.

At first, in the bustle of building and settling down, Pahom was pleased with it all, but when he got used to it he began to think that even here he had not enough land. The first year, he sowed wheat on his share of the Communal land, and had a good crop. He wanted to go on sowing wheat, but had not enough Communal land for the purpose, and what he had already used was not available; for in those parts wheat is only sown on virgin soil or on fallow land. It is sown for one or two years, and then the land lies fallow till it is again overgrown with prairie grass. There were many who wanted such land, and there was not enough for all; so that people quarrelled about it. Those who were better off, wanted it for growing wheat, and those who were poor, wanted it to let to dealers, so that they might raise money to pay their taxes. Pahom wanted to sow more wheat; so he rented land from a dealer for a year. He sowed

much wheat and had a fine crop, but the land was too far from the village--the wheat had to be carted more than ten miles. After a time Pahom noticed that some peasant-dealers were living on separate farms, and were growing wealthy; and he thought:

"If I were to buy some freehold land, and have a homestead on it, it would be a different thing, altogether. Then it would all be nice and compact."

The question of buying freehold land recurred to him again and again.

He went on in the same way for three years; renting land and sowing wheat. The seasons turned out well and the crops were good, so that he began to lay money by. He might have gone on living contentedly, but he grew tired of having to rent other people's land every year, and having to scramble for it. Wherever there was good land to be had, the peasants would rush for it and it was taken up at once, so that unless you were sharp about it you got none. It happened in the third year that he and a dealer together rented a piece of pasture land from some peasants; and they had already ploughed it up, when there was some dispute, and the peasants went to law about it, and things fell out so that the labor was all lost. "If it were my own land," thought Pahom, "I should be independent, and there would not be all this unpleasantness."

So Pahom began looking out for land which he could buy; and he came across a peasant who had bought thirteen hundred acres, but having got into difficulties was willing to sell again cheap. Pahom bargained and haggled with him, and at last they settled the price at 1,500 roubles, part in cash and part to be paid later. They had all but clinched the matter, when a passing dealer happened to stop at Pahom's one day to get a feed for his horse. He drank tea with Pahom, and they had a talk. The dealer said that he was just returning from the land of the Bashkirs, far away, where he had bought thirteen thousand acres of land all for 1,000 roubles. Pahom questioned him further, and the tradesman said:

"All one need do is to make friends with the chiefs. I gave away about one hundred roubles' worth of dressing-gowns and carpets, besides a case of tea, and I gave wine to those who would drink it; and I got the land for less than two cents an acre. And he showed Pahom the title-deeds, saying:

"The land lies near a river, and the whole prairie is virgin soil."

Pahom plied him with questions, and the tradesman said:

"There is more land there than you could cover if you walked a year, and it all belongs to the Bashkirs. They are as simple as sheep, and land can be got almost for nothing."

"There now," thought Pahom, "with my one thousand roubles, why should I get only thirteen hundred acres, and saddle myself with a debt besides. If I take it out there, I can get more than ten times as much for the money."

V

Pahom inquired how to get to the place, and as soon as the tradesman had left him, he prepared to go there himself. He left his wife to look after the homestead, and started on his journey taking his man with him. They stopped at a town on their way, and bought a case of tea, some wine, and other presents, as the tradesman had advised. On and on they went until they had gone more than three hundred miles, and on the seventh day they came to a place where the Bashkirs had pitched their tents. It was all just as the tradesman had said. The people lived on the steppes, by a river, in felt-covered tents. They neither tilled the ground, nor ate bread. Their cattle and horses grazed in herds on the steppe. The colts were tethered behind the tents, and the mares were driven to them twice a day. The mares were milked, and from the milk kumiss was made. It was the women who prepared kumiss, and they also made cheese. As far as the men were concerned, drinking kumiss and tea, eating mutton, and playing on their pipes, was all they cared about. They were all stout and merry, and all the summer long they never thought of doing any work. They were quite ignorant, and knew no Russian, but were good-natured enough.

As soon as they saw Pahom, they came out of their tents and gathered round their visitor. An interpreter was found, and Pahom told them he had come about some land. The Bashkirs seemed very glad; they took Pahom and led him into one of the best tents, where they made him sit on some down cushions placed on a carpet, while they sat round him. They gave him tea and kumiss, and had a sheep killed, and gave him mutton to eat. Pahom took presents out of his cart and distributed them among the Bashkirs, and divided amongst them the tea. The Bashkirs were delighted. They talked a great deal among themselves, and then told the interpreter to translate.

"They wish to tell you," said the interpreter, "that they like you, and that it is our custom to do all we can to please a guest and to repay him for his gifts. You have given us presents, now tell us which of the things we possess please you best, that we may present them to you."

"What pleases me best here," answered Pahom, "is your land. Our land is crowded, and the soil is exhausted; but you have plenty of land and it is good land. I never saw the like of it."

The interpreter translated. The Bashkirs talked among themselves for a while. Pahom could not understand what they were saying, but saw that they were much amused, and that they shouted and laughed. Then they were silent and looked at Pahom while the interpreter said:

"They wish me to tell you that in return for your presents they will gladly give you as much land as you want. You have only to point it out with your hand and it is yours."

The Bashkirs talked again for a while and began to dispute. Pahom asked what they were disputing about, and the interpreter told him that some of them thought they ought to ask their Chief about the land and not act in his absence, while others thought there was no need to wait for his return.

VI

While the Bashkirs were disputing, a man in a large fox-fur cap appeared on the scene. They all became silent and rose to their feet. The interpreter said, "This is our Chief himself."

Pahom immediately fetched the best dressing-gown and five pounds of tea, and offered these to the Chief. The Chief accepted them, and seated himself in the place of honour. The Bashkirs at once began telling him something. The Chief listened for a while, then made a sign with his head for them to be silent, and addressing himself to Pahom, said in Russian:

"Well, let it be so. Choose whatever piece of land you like; we have plenty of it."

"How can I take as much as I like?" thought Pahom. "I must get a deed to make it secure, or else they may say, 'It is yours,' and afterwards may take it away again."

"Thank you for your kind words," he said aloud. "You have much land, and I only want a little. But I should like to be sure which bit is mine. Could it not be measured and made over to me? Life and death are in God's hands. You good people give it to me, but your children might wish to take it away again."

"You are quite right," said the Chief. "We will make it over to you."

"I heard that a dealer had been here," continued Pahom, "and that you gave him a little land, too, and signed title-deeds to that effect. I should like to have it done in the same way."

The Chief understood.

"Yes," replied he, "that can be done quite easily. We have a scribe, and we will go to town with you and have the deed properly sealed."

"And what will be the price?" asked Pahom.

"Our price is always the same: one thousand roubles a day."

Pahom did not understand.

"A day? What measure is that? How many acres would that be?"

"We do not know how to reckon it out," said the Chief. "We sell it by the day. As much as you can go round on your feet in a day is yours, and the price is one thousand roubles a day."

Pahom was surprised.

"But in a day you can get round a large tract of land," he said.

The Chief laughed.

"It will all be yours!" said he. "But there is one condition: If you don't return on the same day to the spot whence you started, your money is lost."

"But how am I to mark the way that I have gone?"

"Why, we shall go to any spot you like, and stay there. You must start from that spot and make your round, taking a spade with you. Wherever you think necessary, make a mark. At every turning, dig a hole and pile up the turf; then afterwards we will go round with a plough from hole to hole. You may make as large a circuit as you please, but before the sun sets you must return to the place you started from. All the land you cover will be yours."

Pahom was delighted. It was decided to start early next morning. They talked a while, and after drinking some more kumiss and eating some more mutton, they had tea again, and then the night came on. They gave Pahom a feather-bed to sleep on, and the Bashkirs dispersed for the night, promising to assemble the next morning at daybreak and ride out before sunrise to the appointed spot.

Pahom lay on the feather-bed, but could not sleep. He kept thinking about the land.

"What a large tract I will mark off!" thought he. "I can easily go thirty-five miles in a day. The days are long now, and within a circuit of thirty-five miles what a lot of land there will be! I will sell the poorer land, or let it to peasants, but I'll pick out the best and farm it. I will buy two ox-teams, and hire two more laborers. About a hundred and fifty acres shall be plough-land, and I will pasture cattle on the rest."

Pahom lay awake all night, and dozed off only just before dawn. Hardly were his eyes closed when he had a dream. He thought he was lying in that same tent, and heard somebody chuckling outside. He wondered who it could be, and rose and went out, and he saw the Bashkir Chief sitting in front of the tent holding his side and rolling about with laughter. Going nearer to the Chief, Pahom asked: "What are you laughing at?" But he saw that it was no longer the Chief, but the dealer who had recently stopped at his house and had told him about the land. Just as Pahom was going to ask, "Have you been here long?" he saw that it was not the dealer, but the peasant who had come up from the Volga, long ago, to Pahom's old home. Then he saw that it was not the peasant either, but the Devil himself with hoofs and horns, sitting there and chuckling, and before him lay a man barefoot, prostrate on the ground, with only trousers and a shirt on. And Pahom dreamt that he looked more attentively to see what sort of a man it was lying there, and he saw that the man was dead, and that it was himself! He awoke horror-struck.

"What things one does dream," thought he.

Looking round he saw through the open door that the dawn was breaking.

"It's time to wake them up," thought he. "We ought to be starting."

He got up, roused his man (who was sleeping in his cart), bade him harness; and went to call the Bashkirs.

"It's time to go to the steppe to measure the land," he said.

The Bashkirs rose and assembled, and the Chief came, too. Then they began drinking kumiss again, and offered Pahom some tea, but he would not wait.

"If we are to go, let us go. It is high time," said he.

VIII

The Bashkirs got ready and they all started: some mounted on horses, and some in carts. Pahom drove in his own small cart with his servant, and took a spade with him. When they reached the steppe, the morning red was beginning to kindle. They ascended a hillock (called by the Bashkirs a shikhan) and dismounting from their carts and their horses, gathered in one spot. The Chief came up to Pahom and stretched out his arm towards the plain:

"See," said he, "all this, as far as your eye can reach, is ours. You may have any part of it you like."

Pahom's eyes glistened: it was all virgin soil, as flat as the palm of your hand, as black as the seed of a poppy, and in the hollows different kinds of grasses grew breast high.

The Chief took off his fox-fur cap, placed it on the ground and said:

"This will be the mark. Start from here, and return here again. All the land you go round shall be yours."

Pahom took out his money and put it on the cap. Then he took off his outer coat, remaining in his sleeveless under coat. He unfastened his girdle and tied it tight below his stomach, put a little bag of bread into the breast of his coat, and tying a flask of water to his girdle, he drew up the tops of his boots, took the spade from his man, and stood ready to start. He considered for some moments which way he had better go--it was tempting everywhere.

"No matter," he concluded, "I will go towards the rising sun."

He turned his face to the east, stretched himself, and waited for the sun to appear above the rim.

"I must lose no time," he thought, "and it is easier walking while it is still cool."

The sun's rays had hardly flashed above the horizon, before Pahom, carrying the spade over his shoulder, went down into the steppe.

Pahom started walking neither slowly nor quickly. After having gone a thousand yards he stopped, dug a hole and placed pieces of turf one on another to make it more visible. Then he went on; and now that he had walked off his stiffness he quickened his pace. After a while he dug another hole.

Pahom looked back. The hillock could be distinctly seen in the sunlight, with the people on it, and the glittering tires of the cartwheels. At

a rough guess Pahom concluded that he had walked three miles. It was growing warmer; he took off his under-coat, flung it across his shoulder, and went on again. It had grown quite warm now; he looked at the sun, it was time to think of breakfast.

"The first shift is done, but there are four in a day, and it is too soon yet to turn. But I will just take off my boots," said he to himself.

He sat down, took off his boots, stuck them into his girdle, and went on. It was easy walking now.

"I will go on for another three miles," thought he, "and then turn to the left. The spot is so fine, that it would be a pity to lose it. The further one goes, the better the land seems."

He went straight on a for a while, and when he looked round, the hillock was scarcely visible and the people on it looked like black ants, and he could just see something glistening there in the sun.

"Ah," thought Pahom, "I have gone far enough in this direction, it is time to turn. Besides I am in a regular sweat, and very thirsty."

He stopped, dug a large hole, and heaped up pieces of turf. Next he untied his flask, had a drink, and then turned sharply to the left. He went on and on; the grass was high, and it was very hot.

Pahom began to grow tired: he looked at the sun and saw that it was noon.

"Well," he thought, "I must have a rest."

He sat down, and ate some bread and drank some water; but he did not lie down, thinking that if he did he might fall asleep. After sitting a little while, he went on again. At first he walked easily: the food had strengthened him; but it had become terribly hot, and he felt sleepy; still he went on, thinking: "An hour to suffer, a life-time to live."

He went a long way in this direction also, and was about to turn to the left again, when he perceived a damp hollow: "It would be a pity to leave that out," he thought. "Flax would do well there." So he went on past the hollow, and dug a hole on the other side of it before he turned the corner. Pahom looked towards the hillock. The heat made the air hazy: it seemed to be quivering, and through the haze the people on the hillock could scarcely be seen.

"Ah!" thought Pahom, "I have made the sides too long; I must make this one shorter." And he went along the third side, stepping faster. He looked at the sun: it was nearly half way to the horizon, and he had

not yet done two miles of the third side of the square. He was still ten miles from the goal.

"No," he thought, "though it will make my land lopsided, I must hurry back in a straight line now. I might go too far, and as it is I have a great deal of land."

So Pahom hurriedly dug a hole, and turned straight towards the hillock.

IX

Pahom went straight towards the hillock, but he now walked with difficulty. He was done up with the heat, his bare feet were cut and bruised, and his legs began to fail. He longed to rest, but it was impossible if he meant to get back before sunset. The sun waits for no man, and it was sinking lower and lower.

"Oh dear," he thought, "if only I have not blundered trying for too much! What if I am too late?"

He looked towards the hillock and at the sun. He was still far from his goal, and the sun was already near the rim. Pahom walked on and on; it was very hard walking, but he went quicker and quicker. He pressed on, but was still far from the place. He began running, threw away his coat, his boots, his flask, and his cap, and kept only the spade which he used as a support.

"What shall I do," he thought again, "I have grasped too much, and ruined the whole affair. I can't get there before the sun sets."

And this fear made him still more breathless. Pahom went on running, his soaking shirt and trousers stuck to him, and his mouth was parched. His breast was working like a blacksmith's bellows, his heart was beating like a hammer, and his legs were giving way as if they did not belong to him. Pahom was seized with terror lest he should die of the strain.

Though afraid of death, he could not stop. "After having run all that way they will call me a fool if I stop now," thought he. And he ran on and on, and drew near and heard the Bashkirs yelling and shouting to him, and their cries inflamed his heart still more. He gathered his last strength and ran on.

The sun was close to the rim, and cloaked in mist looked large, and red as blood. Now, yes now, it was about to set! The sun was quite low, but he was also quite near his aim. Pahom could already see the people on the hillock waving their arms to hurry him up. He could see the fox-fur

cap on the ground, and the money on it, and the Chief sitting on the ground holding his sides. And Pahom remembered his dream.

"There is plenty of land," thought he, "but will God let me live on it? I have lost my life, I have lost my life! I shall never reach that spot!"

Pahom looked at the sun, which had reached the earth: one side of it had already disappeared. With all his remaining strength he rushed on, bending his body forward so that his legs could hardly follow fast enough to keep him from falling. Just as he reached the hillock it suddenly grew dark. He looked up--the sun had already set. He gave a cry: "All my labor has been in vain," thought he, and was about to stop, but he heard the Bashkirs still shouting, and remembered that though to him, from below, the sun seemed to have set, they on the hillock could still see it. He took a long breath and ran up the hillock. It was still light there. He reached the top and saw the cap. Before it sat the Chief laughing and holding his sides. Again Pahom remembered his dream, and he uttered a cry: his legs gave way beneath him, he fell forward and reached the cap with his hands.

"Ah, what a fine fellow!" exclaimed the Chief. "He has gained much land!"

Pahom's servant came running up and tried to raise him, but he saw that blood was flowing from his mouth. Pahom was dead!

The Bashkirs clicked their tongues to show their pity.

His servant picked up the spade and dug a grave long enough for Pahom to lie in, and buried him in it. Six feet from his head to his heels was all he needed.

Notes:

1. One hundred kopeks make a rouble. The kopek is worth about half a cent.
2. A non-intoxicating drink usually made from rye-malt and rye-flour.
3. The brick oven in a Russian peasant's hut is usually built so as to leave a flat top, large enough to lie on, for those who want to sleep in a warm place.
4. 120 "desyatins." The "desyatina" is properly 2.7 acres; but in this story round numbers are used.

5. Three roubles per "desyatina."

6. Five "kopeks" for a "desyatina."



NIGHT AND THE MADMAN

The Project Gutenberg EBook of *The Madman*, by Khalil Gibran

"I am like thee, O, Night, dark and naked; I walk on the flaming path which is above my day-dreams, and whenever my foot touches earth a giant oak tree comes forth."

"Nay, thou art not like me, O, Madman, for thou still lookest backward to see how large a foot-print thou leavest on the sand."

"I am like thee, O, Night, silent and deep; and in the heart of my loneliness lies a Goddess in child-bed; and in him who is being born Heaven touches Hell."

"Nay, thou art not like me, O, Madman, for thou shudderest yet before pain, and the song of the abyss terrifies thee."

"I am like thee, O, Night, wild and terrible; for my ears are crowded with cries of conquered nations and sighs for forgotten lands."

"Nay, thou art not like me, O, Madman, for thou still takest thy little-self for a comrade, and with thy monster-self thou canst not be friend."

"I am like thee, O, Night, cruel and awful; for my bosom is lit by burning ships at sea, and my lips are wet with blood of slain warriors."

"Nay, thou art not like me, O, Madman; for the desire for a sister-spirit is yet upon thee, and thou has not become alone unto thyself."

"I am like thee, O, Night, joyous and glad; for he who dwells in my shadow is now drunk with virgin wine, and she who follows me is sinning mirthfully."

"Nay, thou art not like me, O, Madman, for thy soul is wrapped in the veil of seven folds and thou holdest not thy heart in thine hand."

"I am like thee, O, Night, patient and passionate; for in my breast a thousand dead lovers are buried in shrouds of withered kisses."

"Yea, Madman, art thou like me? Art thou like me? And canst thou ride the tempest as a steed, and grasp the lightning as a sword?"

"Like thee, O, Night, like thee, mighty and high, and my throne is built upon heaps of fallen Gods; and before me too pass the days to kiss the hem of my garment but never to gaze at my face."

"Art thou like me, child of my darkest heart? And dost thou think my untamed thoughts and speak my vast language?"

"Yea, we are twin brothers, O, Night; for thou revealest space and I reveal my soul."



THE VERTICAL CITY

The Project Gutenberg EBook of *The Vertical City*, by Fannie Hurst

In the most vertical city in the world men have run up their dreams and their ambitions into slim skyscrapers that seem to exclaim at the audacity of the mere mortar that sustains them.

Minarets appear almost to tamper with the stars; towers to impale the moon. There is one fifty-six-story rococo castle, built from the five-and-ten-cent-store earnings of a merchant prince, that shoots upward with the beautiful rush of a Roman candle.

Any Manhattan sunset, against a sky that looks as if it might give to the poke of a finger, like a dainty woman's pink flesh, there marches a silhouetted caravan of tower, dome, and the astonished crests of office buildings.

All who would see the sky must gaze upward between these rockets of frenzied architecture, which are as beautiful as the terrific can ever be beautiful.

In the vertical city there are no horizons of infinitude to rest the eyes; rather little breakfast napkins of it showing between walls and up through areaways. Sometimes even a lunchcloth of five, six, or maybe sixty hundred stars or a bit of daylight-blue with a caul of sunshine across, hoisted there as if run up a flagpole.

It is well in the vertical city if the eyes and the heart have a lift to them, because, after all, these bits of cut-up infinitude, as many-shaped as cookies, even when seen from a tenement window and to the accompaniment of crick in the neck, are as full of mysterious alchemy over men's hearts as the desert sky or the sea sky. That is why, up through the wells of men's walls, one glimpse of sky can twist the soul with--oh, the bitter, the sweet ache that lies somewhere within the heart's own heart, curled up there like a little protozoa. That is, if the heart and the eyes have a lift to them. Marylin's had.

* * * * *

Marylin! How to convey to you the dance of her! The silver scheherazade of poplar leaves when the breeze is playful? No. She was far nimbler than a leaf tugging at its stem. A young faun on the brink of a pool, startled at himself? Yes, a little. Because Marylin's head always had a listening look to it, as if for a message that never quite came through to her. From where? Marylin didn't know and didn't know that she didn't know. Probably that accounted for a little pucker that could sometimes alight between her eyes. Scarcely a shadow, rather the shadow of a shadow. A lute, played in a western breeze? Once a note of music, not from a lute however, but played on a cheap harmonica, had caught Marylin's heart in a little ecstasy of palpitations, but that doesn't necessarily signify. Zephyr with Aurora playing? Laughter holding both his sides?

How Marylin, had she understood it, would have kicked the high hat off of such Miltonic phrasing. Ah, she was like--herself!

And yet, if there must be found a way to convey her to you more quickly, let it be one to which Marylin herself would have dipped a bow.

She was like nothing so much as unto a whole two dollars' worth of little five-cent toy balloons held captive in a sea breeze and tugging toward some ozonic beyond in which they had never swum, yet strained so naturally toward.

That was it! A whole two dollars' worth of tugging balloons. Red--blue--orange--green--silver, jerking in hollow-sided collisions, and one fat-faced pink one for ten cents, with a smile painted on one side and a tear on the other.

And what if I were to tell you that this phantom of a delight of a

Marylin, whose hair was a sieve for sun and whose laughter a streamer of it, had had a father who had been shot to death on the underslinging of a freight car in one of the most notorious prison getaways ever recorded, and whose mother--but never mind right here; it doesn't matter to the opening of this story, because Marilyn, with all her tantalizing capacity for paradox, while every inch a part of it all, was not at all a part of it.

For five years, she who had known from infancy the furtive Bradstreet of some of the vertical city's most notorious aliases and gang names, and who knew, almost by baptism of fire, that there were short cuts to an easier and weightier wage envelope, had made buttonholes from eight until five on the blue-denim pleat before it was stitched down the front of men's blue-denim shirts.

At sweet sixteen she, whose mother had borne her out of wed--well, anyway, at sweet sixteen, like the maiden in the saying, she had never been kissed, nor at seventeen, but at eighteen--

It was this way. Steve Turner--"Getaway," as the quick lingo of the street had him--liked her. Too well. I firmly believe, though, that if in the lurid heat lightning of so stormy a career as Getaway's the beauty of peace and the peace of beauty ever found moment, Marilyn nestled in that brief breathing space somewhere deep down within the noisy cabaret of Getaway's being. His eyes, which had never done anything of the sort except under stimulus of the horseradish which he ate in quantities off quick-lunch counters, could smart to tears at the thought of her. And over the emotions which she stirred in him, and which he could not translate, he became facetious--idiotically so.

Slim and supine as the bamboo cane he invariably affected, he would wait for her, sometimes all of the six work-a-evenings of the week, until she came down out of the grim iron door of the shirt factory where she worked, his one hip flung out, bamboo cane bent almost double, and, in his further zeal to attitudinize, one finger screwing up furiously at a vacant upper lip. That was a favorite comedy mannerism, screwing at where a mustache might have been.

"Getaway!" she would invariably admonish, with her reproach all in the inflection and with the bluest blue in her eyes he had ever seen outside of a bisque doll's.

The peculiar joy, then, of linking her sweetly resisting arm into his; of folding over each little finger, so! until there were ten tendrils at the crotch of his elbow and his heart. Of tilting his straw "katy" forward, with his importance of this possession, so that the back of his head came out in a bulge and his hip, and then of walking off with her, so! Ah yes, so!

MARYLIN _(who had the mysterious little jerk in her laugh of a very young child_): "Getaway, you're the biggest case!"

GETAWAY _(wild to amuse her further_): "Hocus pocus, Salamagundi! I smell the blood of an ice-cream sundae!"

MARYLIN _(hands to her hips and her laughter full of the jerks_): "Getaway, stop your monkeyshines. The cop has his eye on you!"

GETAWAY _(sobered):_ "C'm on!"

Therein lay some of the wonder of her freshet laughter. Because to Marilyn a police officer was not merely a uniformed mentor of the law, designed chiefly to hold up traffic for her passing, and with his night stick strike security into her heart as she hurried home of short, wintry evenings. A little procession of him and his equally dread brother, the plain-clothes man, had significantly patrolled the days of her childhood.

Once her mother, who had come home from a shopping expedition with the inside pocket of her voluminous cape full of a harvest of the sheerest of baby things to match Marilyn's blond loveliness--batiste--a whole bolt of Brussels lace--had bitten the thumb of a policeman until it hung, because he had surprised her horribly by stepping in through the fire escape as she was unwinding the Brussels lace.

Another time, from her mother's trembling knee, she had seen her father in a crowded courtroom standing between two uniforms, four fingers peeping over each of his shoulders!

A uniform had shot her father from the underpinnings of the freight car. Her mother had died with the phantom of one marching across her delirium. Even opposite the long, narrow, and exceedingly respectable rooming house in which she now dwelt a uniform had stood for several days lately, contemplatively.

There was a menacing flicker of them almost across her eyeballs, so close they lay to her experience, and yet how she could laugh when Getaway made a feint toward the one on her beat, straightening up into exaggerated decorum as the eye of the law, noting his approach, focused.

"Getaway," said Marilyn, hop-skipping to keep up with him now, "why has old Deady got his eye on you nowadays?"

Here Getaway flung his most Yankee-Doodle-Dandy manner, collapsing inward at his extremely thin waistline, arms akimbo, his step designed to be a mincing one, and his voice as soprano as it could be.

"You don't know the half of it, dearie. I've been slapping granny's

wrist, just like that. Ts-s-st!"

But somehow the laughter had run out of Marylin's voice. "Getaway," she said, stopping on the sidewalk, so that when he answered his face must be almost level with hers--"you're up to something again."

"I'm up to snuff," he said, and gyrated so that the bamboo cane looped a circle.

She almost cried as she looked at him, so swift was her change of mood, her lips trembling with the quiver of flesh that has been bruised.

"Oh, Getaway!" she said, "get away." And pushed him aside that she might walk on. He did not know, nor did she, for that matter, the rustling that was all of a sudden through her voice, but it was almost one of those moments when she could make his eyes smart.

But what he said was, "For the luvagod, whose dead?"

"Me, in here," she said, very quickly, and placed her hand to her flimsy blouse where her heart beat under it.

"Whadda you mean, dead?"

"Just dead, sometimes--as if something inside of me that can't get out had--had just curled up and croaked."

The walk from the shirt factory where Marylin worked, to the long, lean house in the long, lean street where she roomed, smelled of unfastidious bedclothes airing on window sills; of garbage cans that repulsed even high-legged cats; of petty tradesmen who, mysteriously enough, with aerial clotheslines flapping their perpetually washings, worked and sweated and even slept in the same sour garments. Facing her there on these sidewalks of slops, and the unprivacy of stoops swarming with enormous young mothers and puny old children, Getaway, with a certain fox pointiness out in his face, squeezed her arm until she could feel the bite of his elaborately manicured finger nails.

"Marry me, Marylin," he said, "and you'll wear diamonds."

In spite of herself, his bay-rummed nearness was not unpleasant to her. "Cut it out--here, Getaway," she said through a blush.

He hooked her very close to him by the elbow, and together they crossed through the crash of a street bifurcated by elevated tracks.

"You hear, Marylin," he shouted above the din. "Marry me and you'll wear diamonds."

"Getaway, you're up to something again!"

"Whadda you mean?"

"Diamonds on your twenty a week! It can't be done."

His gaze lit up with the pointiness. "I tell you, Marylin, I can promise you headlights!"

"How?"

"Never you bother your little head how; O.K., though."

"_How_, Getaway?"

"Oh--clean--if that's what's worrying you. Clean-cut."

"It _is_ worrying me."

"Saw one on a little Jane yesterday out to Belmont race track. A fist-load for a little trick like her. And sparkle! Say, every time that little Jane daubed some whitewash on her little nosie she gave that grand stand the squints. That's what I'm going to do. Sparkle you up! With a diamond engagement ring. Oh boy! How's that? A diamond engagement ring!"

"Oh, Getaway!" she said, with her hand on the flutter of her throat and closing her eyes as if to imprison the vision against her lids. "A pure white one with lots of fire dancing around it." And little Marylin, who didn't want to want it, actually kissed the bare dot on her left ring finger where she could feel the burn of it, and there in the crowded street, where he knew he was surest of his privacy with her, he stole a kiss off that selfsame finger, too.

"I'll make their eyes hang out on their cheeks like grapes when they see you coming along, Marylin."

"I love them because they're so clear--and clean! Mountain water that's been filtered through pebbles."

"Pebbles is right! I'm going to dike you out in one as big as a pebble. And poils! Sa-y, they're what cost the spondulicks. A guy showed me a string of little ones no bigger than pimples. Know what? That little string could knock the three spots out of a thousand-dollar bond--I mean bill!"

It was then that something flashed out of Marylin's face. A shade might have been lowered; a candle blown out.

"Getaway," she said, with a quick little dig of fingers into his forearm, "you're up to something!"

"Snuff, I said."

"What did you mean by that word, 'bond'?"

"Who built a high fence around the word 'bond'?"

"Bonds! All that stuff in the newspapers about those messengers disappearing out of Wall Street with--bonds! Getaway, are you mixed up in that? Getaway!"

"Well, well! I like that! I had you doped out for fair and warmer to-day. The weather prophet didn't predict no brainstorm."

"That's not answering."

"Well, whadda you know! Miss Sherlock Holmes finds a corkscrew in the wine cellar and is sore because it's crooked!"

"Getaway--answer."

"Whadda you want me to answer, Fairylin? That I'm the master mind behind the--"

"It worries me so! You up in Monkey's room so much lately. You think I don't know it? I do! All the comings and goings up there. Muggs Towers sneaking up to Monkey's room in that messenger boy's suit he keeps wearing all the time now. He's no more messenger boy than I am. Getaway, tell me, you and Muggs up in Monkey's room so often? Footsteps up there! Yours!"

"Gawalmighty! Now it's my footsteps!"

"I know them! Up in Monkey's room, right over mine. I know how you sneak up there evenings after you leave me. It don't look nice your going into the same house where I live, Getaway, even if it isn't to see me. It don't look right from the outside!"

"Nobody can ever say I wanted to harm a hair of your little head. I even look the other way when I pass your door. That's the kind of a modest violet I am."

"It's not that, but the looks. That's the reason, I'll bet, if the truth's known, why Monkey squirmed himself into that room over mine--to hide your comings and goings as if they was to see me."

"Nothing of the kind!"

"Everything--up there--worries me so! Monkey's room right over mine. My ceiling so full of soft footsteps that frighten me. I know your footsteps, Getaway, just as well as anything. The ball-of-your-foot--squeak! The-ball-of-your-foot--squeak!"

"Well, that's a good one! The-ball-of-me-foot--squeak!"

"Everybody tiptoeing! Muggs! Somebody's stocking feet! Monkey's. Steps that aren't honest. All on my ceiling. Monkey never ought to have rented a room in a respectable house like Mrs. Granady's. Nobody but genteel young fellows holding down genteel jobs ever had that room before. Monkey passing himself off as Mr. James Pollard, or whatever it is he calls himself, just for the cover of a respectable house--or of me, for all I know. You could have knocked me down with a feather the first time I met him in the hall. If I did right I'd squeal."

"You would, like hell."

"Of course I wouldn't, but with Mrs. Granady trying to run a respectable house, only the right kind of young fellows and girls rooming there, it's not fair. Monkey getting his nose into a house like that and hatching God knows what! Getaway, what do you keep doing up in that room--all hours--you and all the pussyfooters?"

"That's the thanks a fellow gets for letting a straight word like 'marry' slip between his teeth; that's the thanks a fellow gets for honest-to-God intentions of trying to get his girl out of a shirt factory and dike her out in--"

"But, Getaway, if I was only sure it's all straight!"

"Well, if that's all you think of me--"

"All your big-gun talk about the ring. Of course I--I'd like it. How could a girl help liking it? But only if it's on the level. Getaway--you see, I hate to act suspicious all the time, but all your new silk shirts and now the new checked suit and all. It don't match up with your twenty-dollar job in the Wall Street haberdashery."

Then Getaway threw out one of his feints of mock surprise. "Didn't I tell you, Fairylin? Well, whadda you know about that? I didn't tell her, and me thinking I did."

"What, Getaway, what?"

"Why, I'm not working there any more. Why, Gawalmighty couldn't have pleased that old screwdriver. He was so tight the dimes in his pocket used to mildew from laying. He got sore as a pup at me one day just

because I--"

"Getaway, you never told me you lost that job that I got for you out of the newspaper!"

"I didn't lose it, Marylin. I heard it when it fell. Jobs is like vaccination, they take or they don't."

"They never take with you, Getaway."

"Don't you believe it. I'm on one now--"

"A job?"

"Aw, not the way you mean. Me and a guy got a business proposition on. If it goes through, I'll buy you a marriage license engraved on solid gold."

"What is it, then, the proposition?"

"Can't you trust me, Marylin, for a day or two, until it goes through? Sometimes just talking about it is enough to put the jinx on a good thing."

"You mean--"

"I mean I'm going to have money in my pockets."

"What kind of money?"

"Real money."

"_Honest_ money?"

"Honest-to-God money. And I'm going to dike you out. That's my idea. Pink! That's the color for you. A pink sash and slippers, and one of them hats that show your yellow hair right through it, and a lace umbrella and--"

"And streamers on the hat! I've always been just crazy for streamers on a hat."

"Red-white-and-blue ones!"

"No, just pink. Wide ones to dangle it like a basket."

"And slippers with real diamond buckles."

"What do you mean, Getaway? How can you give me real diamond shoe

buckles--"

"There you go again. Didn't you promise to trust me and my new business proposition?"

"I do, only you've had so many--"

"You do--_only!_ Yah, you do, only you don't!"

"I--You see--Getaway--I know how desperate you can be--when you're cornered. I'll never forget how you--you nearly killed a cop--once! Oh, Getaway, when I think back, that time you got into such trouble with--"

"Leave it to a woman, by Jove! to spoil a fellow's good name, if she has to rub her fingers in old soot to do it."

"I--I guess it is from seeing so much around me all the time that it's in me so to suspect."

"Oh, it's in you all right. Gawalmighty knows that!"

"You see, it's because I've seen so much all my life. That's why it's been so grand these last years since I'm alone and--and away from it. Nothing to fear. My own little room and my own little job and me not getting heart failure every time I recognize a plain-clothes man on the beat or hear a night stick on the sidewalk jerk me out of my sleep. Getaway, don't do anything bad. You had one narrow escape. You're finger-printed. Headquarters wouldn't give you the benefit of a doubt if there was one. Don't--Getaway!"

"Yah, stay straight and you'll stay lonesome."

"Money wouldn't make no difference with me, anyway, if everything else wasn't all right. Nothing can be pink to me even if it is pink, unless it's honest. That's why I hold back, Getaway--there's things in you I--can't trust."

"Yah, fine chance of you holding back if I was to come rolling up to your door in a six-cylinder--"

"I tell you, no! If I was that way I wouldn't be holding down the same old job at the factory. I know plenty of boys who turn over easy money. Too easy--"

"Then marry me, Marylin, and you'll wear diamonds. In a couple of days, when this goes through, this deal with the fellows--oh, _honest_ deal, if that's what you're opening your mouth to ask--I can stand up beside you with money in my pockets. Twenty bucks to the pastor, just like that! Then you can pick out another job and I'll hold it down for you."

Bet your life I will--Oh--here, Marylin--this way--quick!"

"Getaway, why did you turn down this street so all of a sudden? This isn't my way home."

"It's only a block out of the way. Come on! Don't stand gassing."

"You-thought-that-fellow-on-the-corner-of-Dock-Street-might-be-a-plain-clothes-man!"

"What if I did? Want me to go up and kiss him?"

"Why-should-you-care, Getaway?"

"Don't."

"But--"

"Don't believe in hugging the law, though. It's enough when it hugs you."

"I want to go home, Getaway."

"Come on. I'll buy some supper. Steak and French fries and some French pastry with a cherry on top for your little sweet tooth. That's the kind of a regular guy I am."

"No. I want to go home."

"All right, all right! I'm taking you there, ain't I?"

"Straight."

"Oh, you'll go straight, if you can't go that way anywhere but home."

They trotted the little detour in silence, the corners of her mouth wilting, he would have declared, had he the words, like a field flower in the hands of a picnicker. Marylin could droop that way, so suddenly and so whitely that almost a second could blight her.

"Now you're mad, ain't you?" he said, ashamed to be so quickly conciliatory and trying to make his voice grate.

"No, Getaway--not mad--only I guess--sad."

She stopped before her rooming house. It was as long and as lean and as brown as a witch, and, to the more fanciful, something even of the riding of a broom in the straddle of the doorway, with an empty flagpole jutting from it. And then there was the cat, too--not a black one with

gold eyes, just one of the city's myriad of mackerel ones, with chewed ear and a skillful crouch for the leap from ash to garbage can.

"I'm going in now, Getaway."

"Gowann! Get into your blue dress and I'll blow you to supper."

"Not to-night."

"Mad?"

"No. I said only--"

"Sad?"

"No--tired--I guess."

"Please, Marylin."

"No. Some other time."

"When? To-morrow? It's Saturday! Coney?"

"Oh!"

He thought he detected the flash of a dimple. He did. Remember, she was very young and, being fanciful enough to find the witch in the face of her rooming house, the waves at Coney Island, peanut cluttered as they were apt to be, told her things. Silly, unrepeatable things. Nonsense things. Little secret goosefleshing things. Prettinesses. And then the shoot the chutes! That ecstatic leap of heart to lips and the feeling of folly down at the very pit of her. Marylin did like the shoot the chutes!

"All right, Getaway--to-morrow--Coney!"

He did not conceal his surge of pleasure, grasping her small hand in both his. "Good girlie!"

"Good night, Getaway," she said, but with the inflection of something left unsaid.

He felt the unfinished intonation, like a rocket that had never dropped its stick, and started up the steps after her.

"What is it, Marylin?"

"Nothing," she said and ran in.

The window in her little rear room with the zigzag of fire escape across it was already full of dusk. She took off her hat, a black straw with a little pink-cotton rose on it, and, rubbing her brow where it had left a red rut, sat down beside the window. There were smells there from a city bouquet of frying foods; from a pool of old water near a drain pipe; from the rear of a butcher shop. Slops. Noises, too. Babies, traffic, whistles, oaths, barterings, women, strife, life. On her very own ceiling the whisper of footsteps--of restless comings and goings--stealthy comings and goings--and then after an hour, suddenly and ever so softly, the ball-of-a-foot--squeak!
The-ball-of-a-foot--squeak!

Marylin knew that step.

And yet she sat, quiet. A star had come out. Looking up at the napkin of sky let in through the walls of the vertical city, Marilyn had learned to greet it almost every clear evening. It did something for her. It was a little voice. A little kiss. A little upside down pool of light without a spill. A little of herself up there in that beyond--that little napkin of beyond that her eyes had the lift to see.

* * * * *

Who are you, whose neck has never ached from nine hours a day, six days a week, of bending over the blue-denim pleat that goes down the front of men's shirts, to quiver a supersensitive, supercilious, and superior nose over what, I grant you, may appear on the surface to be the omelet of vulgarities fried up for you on the gladdest, maddest strip of carnival in the world?

But it is simpler to take on the cold glaze of sophistication than to remain simple. When the eyelids become weary, it is as if little red dancing shoes were being wrapped away forever, or a very tight heartstring had suddenly sagged, and when plucked at could no longer plang.

To Marilyn, whose neck very often ached clear down into her shoulder blade and up into a bandeau around her brow, and to whom city walls were sometimes like slaps confronting her whichever way she turned, her enjoyment of Coney Island was as uncomplex as A B C. Untortured by any awarenesses of relative values, too simple to strive to keep simple, unself-conscious, and with a hungry heart, she was not a spectator, half ashamed of being amused. She was Coney Island! Her heart a shoot the chutes for sheer swoops of joy, her eyes full of confetti points, the surf creaming no higher than her vitality.

And it was so the evening following, as she came dancing down the kicked-up sand of the beach, in a little bright-blue frock, mercerized silk, if you please, with very brief sleeves that ended right up in the

jolliest part of her arm, with a half moon of vaccination winking out roguishly beneath a finish of ribbon bow, and a white-canvas sport hat with a jockey rosette to cap the little climax of her, and by no means least, a metal coin purse, with springy insides designed to hold exactly fifty cents in nickels.

Once on the sand, which ran away, tickling each step she took, her spirits, it must be admitted, went just a little crazily off. The window, you see, where Marylin sewed her buttonholes six days the week, faced a brick wall that peeled with an old scrofula of white paint. Coney Island faced a world of sky. So that when she pinched Getaway's nose in between the lips of her coin purse and he, turning a double somersault right in his checked suit, landed seated in a sprawl of mock daze, off she went into peals of laughter only too ready to be released.

He bought her a wooden whirring machine, an instrument of noise that, because it was not utilitarian, became a toy of delicious sound.

They rode imitation ocean waves at five cents a voyage, their only _mal de mer_, regret when it was over. He bought her salt-water taffy, and when the little red cave of her mouth became too ludicrously full of the pulpy stuff he tried to kiss its state of candy paralysis, and instantly she became sober and would have no more of his nonsense.

"Getaway," she cried, snapping fingers of inspiration, "let's go in bathing!"

"I'll say we will!"

No sooner said than done. In rented bathing suits, unfastidious, if you will, but, pshaw! with the ocean for wash day, who minded! Hers a little blue wrinkly one that hit her far too far, below the knees, but her head flowered up in a polka-dotted turban, that well enough she knew bound her up prettily, and her arms were so round with that indescribable softness of youth! Getaway, whose eyes could focus a bit when he looked at them, set up a leggy dance at sight of her. He shocked her a bit in his cheap cotton trunks--woman's very old shock to the knobby knees and hairy arms of the beach. But they immediately ran, hand in hand, down the sand and fizz! into the grin of a breaker.

Marylin with her face wet and a fringe of hair, like a streak of seaweed, down her cheek! Getaway, shivery and knobbier than ever, pushing great palms of water at her and she back at him, only less skillfully her five fingers spread and inefficient. Once in the water, he caught and held her close, and yet, for the wonder of it, almost reverentially close, as if what he would claim for himself he must keep intact.

"Marry me, Marylin," he said, with all the hubbub of the ocean about

them.

She reached for some foam that hissed out before she could touch it.

"That's you," he said. "Now you are there, and now you aren't."

"I wish," she said--"oh, Getaway, there's so much I wish!"

"What do you wish?"

She looked off toward the immensity of sea and sky. "I--Oh, I don't know! Being here makes me wish--Something as beautiful as out there is what I wish."

"Out where?"

"There."

"I don't see--"

"You--wouldn't."

And then, because neither of them could swim, he began chasing her through shallow water, and in the kicked-up spray of their own merriment they emerged finally, dripping and slinky, the hairs of his forearms lashed flat, and a little drip of salt water running off the tip of her chin.

Until long after the sun went down they lay drying on the sand, her hair spread in a lovely amber flare, and, stretched full length on his stomach beside her, he built a little grave of sand for her feet. And the crowd thinned, and even before the sun dipped a faint young moon, almost as if wearing a veil, came up against the blue. They were quiet now with pleasant fatigue, and, propped up on his elbows, he spilled little rills of sand from one fist into the other.

"Gee! you're pretty, Marylin!"

"Are I, Getaway?"

"You know you are. You wasn't born with one eye shut and the other blind."

"Honest, I don't know. Sometimes I look in the mirror and hope so."

"You've had enough fellows tell you so."

"Yes, but--but not the kind of fellows that mean by pretty what I mean by pretty."

"Well, this here guy means what you mean by pretty."

"What do you mean by pretty, Getaway?"

"Pep. Peaches. Cream. Teeth. Yellow hair. Arms. Le--those little holes in your cheeks. Dimples. What do I mean by pretty? I mean you by pretty. Ain't that what you want me to mean by pretty?"

"Yes--and no--"

"Well, what the--"

"It's all right, Getaway. It's fine to be pretty, but--not enough--somehow. I--I can't explain it to you--to anybody. I guess pretty isn't the word. It's beauty I mean."

"All right, then, anything your little heart desires--beauty."

"The ocean beauty out there, I mean. Something that makes you hurt and want to hurt more and more. Beauty, Getaway. It's something you understand or something you don't. It can't be talked. It sounds silly."

"Well, then, whistle it!"

"It has to be _felt_."

"Peel me," he said, laying her arm to his bare bicep. "Some little gladiator, eh? Knock the stuffings out of any guy that tried to take you away from me."

She turned her head on its flare of drying hair away from him. The beach was all but quiet and the haze of the end of day in the air, almost in her eyes, too.

"Oh, Getaway!" she said, on a sigh, and again, "Getaway!"

His reserve with her, at which he himself was the first to marvel, went down a little then and he seized her bare arm, kissing it, almost sinking his teeth. The curve of her chin down into her throat, as she turned her head, had maddened him.

"Quit," she said.

"Never you mind. You'll wear diamonds," he said, in his sole phraseology of promise. "Will you get sore if I ask you something, Fairylin?"

"What?"

"Want one now?"

"Want what?"

"A diamond."

"No," she said. "When I'm out here I quit wanting things like that."

"Fine chance a fellow has to warm up to you!"

"Getaway!"

"What?"

"What did you do last night, after you walked home with me?"

"When?"

"You know when."

"Why, bless your heart, I went home, Fairylin!"

"Please, Getaway--"

"Home, Fairy."

"You were up in Monkey's room last night about eleven. Now think, Getaway!"

"Aw now--"

"You were."

"Aw now--"

"Nobody can fool me on your step. You tiptoed for all you were worth, but I knew it! The-ball-of your-foot--squeak! The-ball-of-your foot--squeak!"

"Sure enough, now you mention it, maybe for a minute around eleven, but only for a minute--"

"Please, Getaway, don't lie. It was for nearly all night. Comings and goings on my ceiling until I couldn't sleep, not because they were so noisy, but because they were so soft. Like ugly whispers. Is Monkey the friend you got the deal on with, Getaway?"

"We just sat up there talking old times--"

"And Muggs, about eleven o'clock, sneaking up through the halls, dressed like the messenger boy again. I saw him when I peeked out of the door to see who it was tiptoeing. Getaway, for God's sake--"

He closed over her wrist then, his face extremely pointed. It was a bony face, so narrow that the eyes and the cheek bones had to be pitched close, and his black hair, usually so shiny, was down in a bang now, because it was damp, and to Marilyn there was something sinister in that dip of bang which frightened her.

"What you don't know don't hurt you. You hear that? Didn't I tell you that after a few days this business deal-- _business_, get that?--will be over. Then I'm going to hold down any old job your heart desires. But first I'm going to have money in my pockets! That's the only way to make this old world sit up and take notice. Spondulicks! Then I'm going to carry you off and get spliced. See? Real money. Diamonds. If you weren't so touchy, maybe you'd have diamonds sooner than you think. Want one now?"

"Getaway, I know you're up to something. You and Monkey and Muggs are tied up with those Wall Street bond getaways."

"For the luvagod, cut that talk here! First thing I know you'll have me in a brainstorm too."

"Those fake messenger boys that get themselves hired and, instead of delivering the bonds from one office to another--disappear with them. Muggs isn't wearing that messenger's uniform for nothing. You and Monkey are working with him under cover on something. You can't pass a cop any more without tightening up. I can feel it when I have your arm. You've got that old over-your-shoulder look to you, Getaway. My father--had it. My--mother--too. Getaway!"

"By gad! you can't beat a woman!"

"You don't deny it."

"I do!"

"Oh, Getaway, I'm glad then, glad!"

"Over-the-shoulder look. Why, if I'd meet a plain-clothes this minute I'd go up and kiss him--with my teeth in his ear. That's how much I got to be afraid of."

"Oh, Getaway, I'm so glad!"

"Well, then, lay off--"

"Getaway, you jumped then! Like somebody had hit you, and it was only a kid popping a paper bag."

"You get on my nerves. You'd make a cat nervous, with your suspecting! The more a fellow tries to do for a girl like you the less--Look here now, you got to get the hell out of my business."

She did not reply, but lay to the accompaniment of his violent nervousness and pinchings into the sand, with her face still away from him, while the dusk deepened and the ocean quieted.

After a while: "Now, Marylin, don't be sore. I may be a rotten egg some ways, but when it comes to you, I'm there."

"I'm not sore, Getaway," she said, with her voice still away from him. "Only I--Let's not talk for a minute. It's so quiet out here--so full of rest."

He sat, plainly troubled, leaning back on the palms of his hands and dredging his toes into the sand. In the violet light the tender line of her chin to her throat still teased him.

Down farther along the now deserted beach a youth in a bathing suit was playing a harmonica, his knees hunched under his chin, his mouth and hand sliding at cross purposes along the harp. That was the silhouette of him against a clean sky, almost Panlike, as if his feet might be cloven.

What he played, if it had any key at all, was rather in the mood of Chopin's Nocturne in D flat major. A little sigh for the death of a day, a sob for the beauty of that death, and a hope and ecstasy for the new day yet unborn--all of that on a little throbbing mouth organ.

"Getaway," cried Marylin, and sat up, spilling sand, "that's it! That's what I meant a while ago. Hear? It can't be talked. That's it on the mouth organ!"

"It?"

"It! Yes, like I said. Somebody has to feel it inside of him, just like I do, before he can understand. Can't you feel it? Please! Listen."

"Aw, that's an old jew's-harp. I'll buy you one. How's that?"

"All right, I guess," she said, starting off suddenly toward the bathhouse.

He was relieved that she had thrown off the silence.

"Ain't mad any more, are you, Marylin?"

"No, Getaway--not mad."

"Mustn't get fussy that way with me, Marylin. It scares me off. I've had something to show you all day, but you keep scaring me off."

"What is it?" she said, tiptoe.

His mouth drew up to an oblique. "You know."

"No, I don't."

"Maybe I'll tell you and maybe I won't," he cried, scooping up a handful of sand and spraying her. "What'll you give me if I tell?"

"Why--nothing."

"Want to know?"

But at the narrowing something in his eyes she sidestepped him, stooping down at the door of her bathhouse for a last scoop of sand at him.

"No," she cried, her hair blown like spray and the same breeze carrying her laughter, guiltless of mood, out to sea.

On the way home, though, for the merest second, there recurred the puzzling quirk in her thoughtlessness.

In the crush of the electric train, packed tightly into the heart of the most yammering and petulant crowd in the world--home-going pleasure seekers--a youth rose to give her his seat. A big, beach-tanned fellow with a cowlick of hair, when he tipped her his hat, standing up off his right brow like a little apostrophe to him, and blue eyes so very wide apart, and so clear, that they ran back into his head like aisles with little lakes shining at the ends of them.

"Thank you," said Marylin, the infinitesimal second while his hat and cowlick lifted, her own gaze seeming to run down those avenues of his eyes for a look into the pools at the back.

"That was it, too, Getaway! The thing that fellow looked--that I couldn't say. He said it--with his eyes."

"Who?"

"That fellow who gave me this seat."

"I'll break his face if he goo-goos you," said Getaway, who by this time

had a headache and whose feet had fitted reluctantly back into patent leather.

But inexplicably, even to herself, that night, in the shadow of the stoop of her witch of a rooming house, she let him kiss her lips. His first of her--her first to any man. It may have been that suddenly she was so extremely tired--tired of the lay of the week ahead, suggested by the smells and the noises and the consciousness of that front box pleat.

The little surrender, even though she drew back immediately, was wine to him and as truly an intoxicant.

"Marylin," he cried, wild for her lips again, "I can't be held off much longer. I'm straight with you, but I'm human, too."

"Don't, Getaway, not here! To-morrow--maybe."

"I'm crazy for you!"

"Go home now, Getaway."

"Yes--but just one more--"

"Promise me you'll go straight home from here--to bed."

"I promise. Marylin, one more. One little more. Your lips--"

"No, no--not now. Go--"

Suddenly, by a quirk in the dark, there was a flash of something down Marylin's bare third finger, so hurriedly and so rashly that it scraped the flesh.

"That's for you! I've been afraid all day. Touchy! Didn't I tell you? Diamonds! Now will you kiss me? Now will you?"

In the shadow of where she stood, looking down, it was as if she gazed into a pool of fire that was reaching in flame clear up about her head, and everywhere in the conflagration Getaway's triumphant "Now will you! Now will you!"

"Getaway," she cried, flecking her hand as if it burned, "where did you get this?"

"It's for you, Fairylin, and more like it coming. It weighs a carat and a half. That stone's worth more than a sealskin jacket. You're going to have one of those, too. Real seal! Now are you sore at me any more? Now you've a swell kick coming, haven't you? Now! Now!"

"Getaway," she cried behind her lit hand, because her palm was to her mouth and above it her eyes showing the terror in their whites, "where did you get this?"

"There!" he said, and kissed her hotly and squarely on the lips.

Somehow, with the ring off her finger and in a little pool of its light as it lay at his feet, where he stood dazed on the sidewalk, Marilyn was up the stoop, through the door, up two flights, and through her own door, slamming it, locking it, and into her room, rubbing and half crying over her left third finger where the flash had been.

She was frightened, because for all of an hour she sat on the end of the cot in her little room trembling and with her palms pressed into her eyes so tightly that the darkness spun. There was quick connection in Marilyn between what was emotional and what was merely sensory. She knew, from the sickness at the very pit of her, how sick were her heart and her soul--and how afraid.

She undressed in the dark--a pale darkness relieved by a lighted window across the areaway. The blue mercerized dress she slid over a hanger, covering it with one of her cotton nightgowns and putting it into careful place behind the cretonne curtain that served her as clothes closet. Her petticoat, white, with a rill of lace, she folded away. And then, in her bare feet and a pink-cotton nightgown with a blue bird machine-stitched on the yoke, stood cocked to the hurry of indistinct footsteps across her ceiling, and in the narrow slit of hallway outside her door, where the stairs led up still another flight, the-ball-of-a-foot--squeak! The sharp crack of a voice. Running.

"Getaway!" cried Marilyn's heart, almost suffocating her with a dreadful spasm of intuition.

It was all so quick. In the flash of her flung-open door, as her head in its amber cloud leaned out, Getaway, bending almost double over the upper banister, his lips in his narrow face back to show a white terribleness of strain that lingered in the memory, hurled out an arm suddenly toward two men mounting the steps of the flight below him.

There was a shot then, and on the lower flight one of the men, with an immediate red mouth opening slowly in his neck, slid downstairs backward, face up.

Suddenly, from a crouching position beside her door, the second figure shot forward now, with ready and perfect aim at the already-beginning-to-be-nerveless figure of Getaway hanging over the banister with the smoking pistol.

By the reaching out of her right hand Marilyn could have deflected that

perfect aim. In fact, her arm sprang toward just that reflex act, then stayed itself with the jerk of one solid body avoiding collision with another.

So much quicker than it takes in the telling there marched across Marylin's sickened eyes this frieze: Her father trailing dead from the underslinging of a freight car. That moment when a uniform had stepped in from the fire escape across the bolt of Brussels lace; her mother's scream, like a plunge into the heart of a rapier. Uniforms--contemplating. On street corners. Opposite houses. Those four fingers peeping over each of her father's shoulders in the courtroom. Getaway! His foxlike face leaner. Meaner. Black mask. Electric chair. Volts. Ugh--volts! God--you know--best--help--

When the shot came that sent Getaway pitching forward down the third-floor flight she was on her own room floor in a long and merciful faint. Marylin had not reached out.

* * * * *

Time passed. Whole rows of days of buttonholes down pleats that were often groped at through tears. Heavy tears like magnifying glasses. And then, with that gorgeous and unassailable resiliency of youth, lighter tears. Fewer tears. Few tears. No tears.

Under the cretonne curtain, though, the blue mercerized frock hung unworn, and in its dark drawer remained the petticoat with its rill of lace. But one night, with a little catch in her throat (it was the last of her sobs), she took out the sport hat, and for no definite reason began to turn the jockey rosette to the side where the sun had not faded it.

These were quiet evenings in her small room. All the ceiling agitation had long ago ceased since the shame of the raided room above, and Muggs, in his absurd messenger's suit, and Monkey marching down the three flights to the clanking of steel at the wrists.

There were new footsteps now. Steps that she had also learned to know, but pleasantly. They marched out so regularly of mornings, invariably just as she was about to hook her skirtband or pull on her stockings. They came home so patly again at seven, about as she sat herself down to a bit of sewing or washing-out. They went to bed so pleasantly. Thud, on the floor, and then, after the expectant interval of unlacing, thud again. They were companionable, those footsteps, almost like reverential marching on the grave of her heart.

Marylin reversed the rosette, and as the light began to go sat down beside her window, idly, looking up. There was the star point in her patch of sky, eating its way right through the purple like a diamond,

and her ache over it was so tangible that it seemed to her she could almost lift the hurt out of her heart, as if it were a little imprisoned bird. And as it grew darker there came two stars, and three, and nine, and finally the sixty hundred.

Then from the zig of the fire escape above, before it twisted down into the zag of hers, there came to Marylin, through the medley of city silences and the tears in her heart, this melody, on a jew's-harp:

If it had any key at all, it was in the mood of Chopin's Nocturne in D flat major. A little sigh for the death of a day, a sob for the beauty of that death, and the throb of an ecstasy for the new day not yet born.

Looking up against the sheer wall of the vertical city, on the ledge of fire escape above hers, and in the yellow patch of light thrown out from the room behind, a youth, with his knees hunched up under his chin, and his mouth and hand moving at cross purposes, was playing the harmonica.

Wide apart were his eyes, and blue, so that while she gazed up, smiling, as he gazed down, smiling, it was almost as if she ran up the fire escape through the long clear lanes of those eyes, for a dip into the little twin lakes at the back of them.

And--why, didn't you know?--there was a lift of cowlick to the right side of his front hair, as he sat there playing in the twilight, that was exactly the shape of an apostrophe!



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